

# THE IMPACT OF POSTMODERNISM ON FASHION SINCE 1980

by

MELODY ANNE PENA

(Under the Direction of Patricia Hunt-Hurst)

## ABSTRACT

The major objective of this research was to identify aspects of postmodern influences in dress as found in the 1980s issues of *Vogue* magazine and *Harper's Bazaar* in an effort to determine the extent of postmodernism's influence on fashion in the United States during the 1980s. Four major characteristics were determined as being representative of postmodernistic influences on dress. These were a (1) a denunciation of fashion authorities, (2) gender blurring in dress, (3) a confusion of signs in dress, and (4) a recycling of past dress styles. A checklist was formulated out of the selected postmodern characteristics for the purpose of objective and methodical coding. A longitudinal content analysis method was employed by using the abovementioned periodicals as a database. The findings from this research have suggested that postmodernism did have a significant impact on fashion as depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* from 1980-1989.

INDEX WORDS: Postmodernism, Fashion, Historic Costume, Historic Methodology

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MELODY ANNE PENA

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MELODY ANNE PENA

Major Professor: Patricia Hunt-Hurst

Committee: Soyoung Kim  
April Allen

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The notion of postmodernism is dubious and challenging to consider because, as a term, it is habitually used contradictorily and no concrete agreement of its meaning is in existence. Scholars incessantly argue over its definition, meaning, inception, and whether or not it has even ever existed. However, the concept of postmodernism is an extremely important one to address because many artists, philosophers and social scientists have labeled our existing culture since the 1980s as postmodern, and since that time it could be argued that elements corresponding to postmodern culture have often been seen in fashion trends. In fact, some have gone so far as to assert that if it were not for postmodernism, fashion would not be a proper subject matter to consider for serious study (Anderson, 1983). And of all the major industries flourishing during postmodernity, fashion in apparel is the most readily associated with the forces of the period of late capitalism, specifically an obsessive devotion to possessions, conspicuous consumption, built-in obsolescence, hyper individualism, and an exploitation of art and culture (Leitch, 1996; Morgado, 1996).

The basic presuppositions enveloping the postmodern debate can be succinctly summarized as a sweeping alteration in the values and mores of Western society from those of the recent past, resulting in a different and radically changed social existence. While the term “modern” is often used in our daily vernacular as an adjective to describe

the present system of things, social theory uses this term to refer back to the period in history that emerged circa the time of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment. Thus, this term carries connotations of the assumptions and norms that have dictated our understanding of western culture since the 1700s. The aim of postmodern philosophers is to raise suspicions and doubts against those modern assumptions that are still ubiquitous in our culture, causing us to question the ideas we uphold concerning the nature of truth, knowledge, power, language, and the self (Flax, 1990; Morgado, 1996; Henderson & Delong, 2000). Modernism tended to be a romantic discourse, nostalgic for a primitive era, and assuming an omniscient godlike position that placed itself outside and above the society it critiqued. It valued that considered to be essential, authentic and substantial, while postmodernism is engaged in disrupting this transcendental stance (Sawchuk, 1988).

To better understand the concept of postmodernism, it is beneficial to first discuss some of the key components that make up the concept of modernism. These include, but are not limited to, the modern objectives of progress, rationality, order and individualism.

One objective of modernity is said to have been the promotion of progress. Social theorists Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard are credited with this contribution to postmodern theory. Lyotard postulated that modernity was characterized by perpetual change in the pursuit of progress. Postmodernity, however, is the apogee of this process towards progress, where perpetual change has merely become the existing state of affairs and the idea of progress is defunct (Flax, 1990; Morgado, 1996; Connor, 1997).

Progress is said to be the result of rationality. Thus the second agenda of modernism is that of the concomitant role of rationality. Modern thought asserts that

absolute truths exist and can be discovered by the application of rational thought. By means of taking in further knowledge, one can achieve a happier, more meaningful life. The application of rational thought, especially rational thought that manifests itself through the performance of science, is said to offer an objective, dependable and transcendent basis for knowledge (Flax, 1990; Morgado, 1996).

A third premise of modernism is order. The conjecture remains that the fostering of further rationality is conducive to the creation of order, and the more ordered a society is, the better it will function. Because of modernism's obsession with the establishment of order, there is a constant preoccupation to shun things considered "disorderly." A rigid dichotomy has been established to define things as either "orderly" or "disorderly," so that those things that are defined as "orderly" can assert their superiority and control over the "disorderly." In Western society, this disorder becomes the "other." The other is defined as secondary and lesser in a list of binary oppositions. For example, anything non-male, non-Anglo, non-heterosexual becomes the "other," or the disorder, and is shunned by modern, rational society (de Beauvoir, 1949; Klages, 2003).

In a further attempt to achieve order, modern societies have the inclination to set up systems of totality, or what Lyotard refers to as "master-narratives" or "meta-narratives." Lyotard asserts that order is reinforced by these meta-narratives, or large theoretical explanatory tools a culture uses to explain its ideologies. Every belief system has a meta-narrative. For example, the classical Marxist meta-narrative is that capitalism will crumble upon itself and give way to utopian socialism (Connor, 1997; Klages, 2003).

Lastly, a major component of modernism is that of the existence of a static, essential self. Distinguishing characteristics of this modern/Enlightenment stable identity

consists of a type of rational ability that claims an innate, autonomous identity and is able to realize and assert an essential self (Flax, 1990). The modern individual was said to be connected to a unique and distinctive personality and identity, able to produce a completely unique vision of the world (Jameson, 1983).

These theories about progress, rationality, truth, knowledge, order, power and the self offer a simple structure for the legitimation of modern Western culture and the principles that guide its institutions. Thus, some of the key components that make up the philosophy of postmodernism include the rejection of the notion of progress, the abandonment of absolute or pure truth, the denunciation of meta-narratives and transcendent reason, and the acceptance of unstable, fragmented identities.

The postmodern notion of the grinding halt of progress points to a complete loss of faith in the supposition that progress will result in an improved mode of living. Instead, in postmodern culture, progress is synonymous with “new,” and anything new is viewed as a mere ploy to increase consumption. Postmodernity is fully aware of capitalism’s ability to profit on virtually every discourse, every humanitarian act, every emotion and sentiment (Sawchuk, 1988). Moreover, some theorists have speculated that the twentieth century’s holocaust, world wars, and threats of nuclear conflicts and chemical warfare were the end of the age of modernism and the Enlightenment; when man’s power over reason and science were used in such abhorrent ways that it became clear that progress was no longer a linear progression towards improved philanthropic ends (Morgado, 1996).

The product of this postmodern outlook is the loss of confidence in absolute truth and transcendent reason. It is suggested that the scientific method, “like historical

writing, can best be understood as sophisticated rhetoric, convincingly contrived arguments that appear true only because they adhere to the requirements of the method established for presenting scientific arguments” (Morgado, 1996, p.44; Haraway, 1988). To illustrate, a postmodernist would say that we have created systems in science like genus and species, for example, and claim that these are true and reliable. But in fact, if another system had been created, we would claim that that system was just as true. The rejection of absolute truth equalizes the position of, for example, biology and history. They are both merely stories and nothing more. Where modernism believed that all problems could be solved by the rational application of science, and that reason is not something created, but *accessed*, postmodernism claims that there is no such thing as transcendent reason; everything is humanly created (not granted to us by nature or an all-knowing deity). The systems we have fashioned do not transcend us; we have created them, and thus, we can destroy them.

Therefore, postmodernism is also highly critical of large-scale narratives that boast cross-explanatory power. Meta-narratives are criticized for being used as tools to mask social inequalities that are inherently built into its very structures. Thus, instead of grand systems, there is a scaling back to smaller systems and ad hoc structures that explain small practices and localized events, rather than large-scale universal theories (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990).

And finally, postmodernism marks the end of individualism, or the “death of the subject.” Postmodernism rejects the notion of a stable, coherent self, and embraces the notion of a shifting identity that is unstable and socially constructed. Postmodernism says that our identity is based on social norms that are created and tell us how to act and

behave, and that there is no such thing as an innate, autonomous identity that assumes an essence (Flax, 1990). The idea of a personal identity or a unique individual is a thing of the past. There are two arguments associated with this discourse. The first asserts that there was such a thing as individualism or the individual subject in modern times, in the classic age of competitive capitalism. But now, in our postmodern age of corporate capitalism, that unique subject is no longer existent (Jameson, 1983). The second argument is poststructuralist in nature, saying that there was never such a thing as an individual subject, that idea was only a myth. Instead, this notion was merely a cultural mystification that fooled people into believing that they owned a unique personal identity (Jameson, 1983).

Fashion played an important role in modern culture. Fashion cycles give material form to new innovations and social ideas, and thus fashion has come to virtually be the embodiment of progress (Morgado, 1996). However, postmodernists interpret the modern link between fashion and progress as merely an illusion that distracted attention from fashion's true agenda. Instead of communicating actual progress, postmodernists claim that the role of fashion was really to communicate the allegory of progress (Morgado, 1996).

Postmodern culture sometimes critiques fashion as change merely for the sake of change. For example, in their book *Body Invaders* media theorists Arthur and Marilouise Kroker say that the postmodern society is one of a "general economy of excess," and fashion as one particular "spectacular sign of a parasitical culture which, always anyway excessive, disaccumulative, and sacrificial, is drawn inexorably towards the ecstasy of catastrophe" (Kroker, A. & Kroker, M., 1987, p.45). In theories that have modernist



foundations, fashion is reflective of culture; in postmodern theory, fashion is the core of culture. Demands for innovation and change are now essential and creep into every aspect of social life. “In postmodern culture fashion is not only clothing; it is bodies, objects, and lifestyles; it is entertainment, art, morals, politics, economics, and science” (Morgado, 1996, p.44).

### Statement of Purpose

Most social scholars agree and claim that postmodernism crept into the social landscape circa 1980 (Klages, 2003; Connor, 1997; Wilson, 1992, 2001). However, when discussing and attempting to explain the esoteric concept that is postmodernism, much attention is given to the areas of architecture, economics, technology, art, or literature, and the area of fashion is often overlooked. While there has been some preliminary research done on the topic of postmodernism’s influence on fashion (Kaiser, 1990a, 1997; Morgado, 1996; Henderson & Delong, 2000; Wilson, 1992, 2001; Leitch, 1996; Muggleton, 2000), these scholars have mainly addressed how the conditions of the postmodern age have allowed for a multitude of simultaneous styles and highly individualized appearances, and a discussion of concrete examples of which postmodern characteristics are evident in dress via a content analysis of past material culture have been absent from these considerations. As Strinati stated, “there has, in fact, been a tendency to assume that postmodernism has become widespread in modern cities. However, less attention has been devoted to demonstrating that this is the case” (quoted in Muggleton, 2000, p.5). Since little scholarly research has been done in this area, often because the social importance of fashion is frequently trivialized (Wilson, 1992, 2001; Craik, 1994; Breward, 2003), this study attempted to integrate the concept of

postmodernism with the discipline of fashion in order to determine the extent of postmodernism's influence on fashion in the United States during the 1980s. Though the genesis of our postmodern era is sometimes dated earlier, the 1980s was an appropriate starting point for this analysis, as it is generally held that postmodernism did not affect our cultural scene with full force until around the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Connor, 1997; Wilson, 1992, 2001).

This study was accomplished by analyzing two fashion periodicals, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. The fashion illustrations and verbal discourse featured within these two publications from 1980-1989 were examined in an attempt to demonstrate if postmodernism had an influence on fashionable apparel of the period.

#### Objective

The major objective of this study was to identify aspects of postmodern influences in dress as seen in the 1980s issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, rather than provide a continuous, detailed record of fashion change. This objective was achieved through the following steps:

1. To read, analyze and integrate the works of authors who have attempted to discuss and define the phenomenon of postmodernity in an effort to make sense of the complex paradigm that is postmodernism and the ways in which it relates to fashion.
2. To select several concrete examples of major elements of postmodern culture that may have had an influence on contemporary fashions of the 1980s.
3. To examine these selected aspects of postmodern characteristics by utilizing publications of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* periodicals published in the 1980s to

decipher whether or not these facets were present at the time, and ultimately, whether or not the then emerging movement of postmodernism had a notable effect on contemporary fashions of the period.

4. To establish the frequency of occurrence of the use of the selected postmodern characteristics in fashionable apparel of this era.
5. To determine whether there is a difference between both periodicals in the frequency of occurrence of the use of postmodern characteristics in fashionable apparel of this time.
6. To ascertain the most common aspects of postmodern characteristics, from the selected characteristics, as they are manifest in the fashionable dress of the 1980s as depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

#### Significance

1. This research enhanced the understanding of how postmodernism has influenced fashionable clothing of the 1980s.
2. This research adds to the body of knowledge about the history of American dress in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Limitations

1. The research for this project was limited to two primary sources, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and to the time frame of 1980 – 1989.
2. *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* are publications that feature high fashion items and present a rather refined image of the individual, and are thus not representative of the average person. Their target audience is that of the upper-middle class to

upper class stratum of society, and it is those lifestyles that will be represented in the periodicals.

3. Both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* generally solely depict fashion intended for the female gender.
4. Fashion illustrations in these publications may not be entirely representative of the apparel worn during the time period in question. However, they do represent what was being presented as stylish clothing during that time frame.
5. Only one rater, the researcher, was responsible for carrying out the coding of material in the content analysis.

#### Definitions

1. Modern – the historical time period from the Age of Enlightenment to the present era; the modern period holds notions about continuous progress and the dominance of scientific rationality (Flax, 1990)
2. Postmodernism – scholarly or aesthetic projects which make up constitutive elements of postmodernity (Barnard, 1996)
3. Postmodernity – a term utilized by philosophers, social scientists and culture critics to allude to aspects of contemporary art, culture, economics and social conditions that are the consequence of the unique characteristics of late 20th century and early 21st century life. Some of these characteristics include globalization, commercialization of art and culture, the rejection of authority, and the commoditization of knowledge (Wikipedia, 2005)
4. Postmodern condition – characteristics of contemporary culture which suggest a departure from modern assumptions and Enlightenment beliefs (Morgado, 1996)

5. Fashion – a dynamic social *process* where new styles are created and popularly received by a consuming public; *as object*: a style accepted by a large group of people at a particular time (Kaiser, 1990b)
6. Style – a distinctive attribute or way of expression; in regards to clothing, style describes the lines that differentiate forms and shapes from each other (Kaiser, 1990b)
7. Trickle-Up Theory – the converse of sociologist George Simmel’s “trickle-down” theory, which states that fashions tend to “trickle-down” from upper to lower classes; (Kaiser, 1990b) the trickle-up theory suggests that lower socioeconomic classes influence the fashions of individuals belonging to upper classes
8. Fashion Cycle – the episodic return of specific styles or general shapes and silhouettes (Wolfe, 1989)
9. Retro– relating to, reviving, or being the styles and especially the fashions of the past (Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, 2005); clothing, furniture, cars, etc. of the past
10. Bricolage – from the French term *bricoleur* (handyman); the use of past materials and styles to create new meanings (Barnard, 1996)
11. Pastiche – a straight imitation of past styles without ironic ulterior motives (Barnard, 1996)
12. Narrative – in place of “discourse”; theoretical explanatory tools a culture uses to explain its ideologies

13. Period of late capitalism – the exacerbation of labor exploitation and profit maximization; this period is sometimes interpreted as the end of capitalism in its present form (Morgado, 1996)
14. Deconstructionism – a school of thought founded by French post-structuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida; the focus of a deconstructive analysis is to examine rigid binaries within a text and show how the two opposing terms are actually fluid and impossible to entirely separate. In short, the aim of a deconstructionist is to show that categories do not actually exist in any absolute sense (Wikipedia, 2005)
15. Polysemy - having many meanings; having or being open to several meanings

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To establish a solid foundation for this study, this section will first begin by discussing the historical background of the United States during the 1980s, as well as discussing fashionable apparel for women during this decade. Secondly, the publications that will be utilized in this study—*Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*—will be briefly introduced. Additionally, fashion and its relationship to modernity will be discussed as a necessary precursor to any further discussion of fashion and its relationship to postmodernity. Fashion as both an allegorical and an undecidable object will be discussed, as these are critical concepts in discourses addressing postmodernism. Next, the cyclical nature of fashion, how fashion cycles have quickened at an astonishing rate, and the relationship this phenomenon may have to postmodernism will be reviewed. Further, the trend of the rejection of authority in fashion will be detailed, as will be the concept of cultural and ethnic groups with conflicting ideals, and how these groups are a significant aspect in the postmodern social landscape that give further testimony to postmodernity's penchant to reject authority. Additionally, the topic of semiotics in dress will be considered, and how these signs produced an almost schizophrenic effect on sartorial adornment during the period in question. The occurrence of a recycling of simultaneous past dress styles will also be addressed. And lastly, the postmodern characteristics established for use in this study will be introduced.

## The 1980s

The 1980s has an infamous reputation for being a decade characterized by greed and overindulgence. Subjects that epitomize the decade include money culture, the allure of investment banking, and the conspicuous consumption of the nouveau rich. These topics are reoccurring themes that frequently appeared in journalistic writings of this time period.

During the eighties, individuals in industrialized nations inhabiting the top socioeconomic classes experienced a marked increase in their personal income, and acted in response by displaying their pecuniary success through the purchases of costly consumer goods, including clothing. Economic policies launched by U.S. President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s set the economic trends for the rest of the decade. These policies included tax reform, deregulation, and heavy deficit spending; fiscal plans designed for the explicit purpose of abetting those in the top economic stratum of society. These policies were encapsulated by a popular American saying at the time, "a rising tide lifts all boats" (Steele, 1997, p. 111). The idea was that by increasing the wealth of society's most affluent individuals, their benefits would "trickle down" to aid the rest of society as well. This type of economic theory has been referred to derisively as "trickle-down economics" (Steele, 1997; Tortora & Eubank, 1998; Wikipedia, 2005).

Of course, the trickle-down theory was more theoretical than practical, but when it came to consumer spending on luxury items, that was inconsequential. While it is highly unlikely that many middle class citizens were in the financial position to spend large amounts of money on high-price designer clothing and accessories, yuppies who enjoyed a significant increase in disposable income were very much inclined to do so.



Yuppies were the byproduct of the booming economy that made the acquisition and showy display of one's wealth possible. Yuppie was the nickname given to young, upwardly mobile professionals who were able to purchase high-status possessions to indicate their socioeconomic status. The hectic lifestyle of a yuppie meant that after their long hours spent in the office, rare free time was spent hedonistically by blowing their disposable income on frivolous items. The yuppie uniform consisted of sharp business attire and wide-shouldered "power suits" in varying cuts for men and women (Steele, 1997; Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

All the while, the designers and manufacturers of high-end fashionable clothing profited from the yuppies' status rituals. Fashion historian Valerie Steele adeptly illustrates this point when she quotes the *New Yorker's* Holly Brubach (1992) saying, "Conspicuous consumption...during the Reagan years was regarded as a badge of personal achievement...The heroes of the eighties, who built junk-bond empires and casinos and shopping malls as monuments to themselves, outfitted their wives in Christian Lacroix" (Steele, 1997, p.111).

#### 1980s Women's Fashions

The prosperous economic times of the Reagan years made showy displays of one's wealth socially acceptable. This trend especially manifested itself through the wearing of flamboyant clothing. Evening wear in the eighties, in all its grandiose opulence, was an especially hot topic for the fashion press. Further, there was a surge of popular interest in fashion designers during this time. The general public became fascinated with "genius" creators, especially those like Christian Lacroix and Karl Lagerfeld who brilliantly played the part (Steele, 1997). But even with the wealthy

patronizing couture labels, the focus of couture designers had changed. No longer were courtiers attempting to compete with prêt-à-porter, but instead shifted their attention to suits, dresses, and evening wear (Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

The notion of the fashion industry's role as an all-knowing dictator of stylish clothing had become defunct by the eighties, and changes within the industry during this time confirmed this proposition. Prior to the 1970s, fashion scholars generally held the idea that fashion trends began by the mainstream adoption of styles that "trickled-down" from the upper-class elite. However, by the 1960s, when mainstream fashion began incorporating styles that originated with hippies, the idea of a "trickle-up" theory was taking hold. It became clear that women's clothing styles were not approaching any consistent model; pants and skirts of any length, fit and style were all simultaneously fashionable, and a clear trend of fashion's direction over time was lost (Tortora & Eubank, 1998; Payne, Winakor, & Farrell-Beck, 1992).

It is a truism that dress is an inevitable representation of our culture and our value systems. Perhaps the real issue at hand then was not an overwhelming obsession with high-fashion in the eighties. Rather, perhaps it was that our clothing in the eighties so succinctly and precisely captured the "enterprise-culture ethos of the times" all too well (Wilson, 1992, p.14).

#### *Vogue and Harper's Bazaar*

*Vogue* is known as the nation's leading fashion book, and "the bible of fashion" (Endres & Lueck, 1995, p.417). Founded in 1892, *Vogue* entered into its second century in the 1990s as the strongest fashion periodical in the United States with a circulation of 1.2 million issues, and a 43 percent share of "beauty, fashion, and retail" advertising

(Endres & Lueck, 1995, p.417). One of *Vogue's* strongest competitors, *Harper's Bazaar* has also been one of the leading fashion periodicals throughout the twentieth century. *Harper's Bazaar* also happens to be the first women's fashion periodical in the United States, founded in 1867 (Endres & Lueck, 1995). Both publications, by means of their fashion photographs and incisive editorials, have adroitly epitomized the changes that have taken place in the representation of the fashionable woman and her clothing.

*Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* were chosen as the publications to be used for data collection in this research project as they both hold leading market positions in the fashion periodical industry, have a large reader coverage, and were readily available for use at the University of Georgia main library.

#### Fashion and Modernity

The prefix "post" in postmodernity suggests that modernity is related to and preceded it. Therefore, prior to discussing fashion and postmodernity, fashion and its relation to modernity first needs to be addressed. Fashion analyst Elizabeth Wilson and social theorist Gail Faurschou both place the inception of the modern era as arising with the ascent of the industrial revolution. Both concur that it is only with the rise of industrial capitalism that fashion becomes salient (Faurschou, 1988; Wilson, 2003; Barnard, 2002).

Wilson asserts that during the industrial age fashion was responsible for defining the essence of both city culture and life in the west, challenging the former reign of royalty, family and religious conviction (Wilson, 2003). Drawing from Marxist theory, Faurschou draws attention to how fashion found its roots in modernity by pointing to how dress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were manufactured according to

an “ideology of needs.” Unlike the postmodern tendency to market products based on the qualities involved in its consumption, capitalism at this time was more invested in selling products based on the qualities that went into their production. “The early capitalists stressed the craftsmanship, traditional values, and tastes that were important to the social economy of prestige and class distinction (Faurichou, 1988, p.80).” Goods were advertised in a manner based on the qualities of the goods themselves (Barnard, 2002).

Thus, in modern times, products were sold on the strength of its “use value”—that the product would work, and that it would work for a long time. According to American postmodern philosopher Frederic Jameson, this was possible because products still held traces of the human labor that went into their creation. They were not yet the “disembodied, free-floating abstract commodities of the mass consumer market” (Faurichou, 1988, p.81). Additionally, products were also identified by their “exchange value” in modernity. That is to say, goods were defined in terms of what one would need to trade in order to purchase it. Hence, a solid link existed between the product and its meaning, whether that meaning had to do with gender, status, or the functional purpose of the product (Barnard, 2002).

### Fashion and Postmodernity

To explain the fracture between modernity and postmodernity, Faurichou draws on Jameson’s ideas on the period of late capitalism and French social theorist Baudrillard’s notions on the object-value system. In short, where modernity thought of the object in terms of production, postmodernity thinks of it in terms of consumption (Barnard, 2002). According to Jameson, the relationship between a commodity and the labor that went into its production had not yet been fully concealed in modernity. In

postmodernity, any hint of human labor is disassociated from the item, and the relationship to the work obscured (Barnard, 2002). Faurschou illustrates this trend best when she states, “Postmodernity is no longer an age in which bodies produce commodities, but where commodities produce bodies: bodies for aerobics, bodies for sport cars, bodies for vacations, bodies for Pepsi, for Coke, and of course, bodies for fashion,—total bodies, a total look. The colonization and appropriation of the body as its own production/consumption machine in late capitalism is a fundamental theme of contemporary socialization” (Faurschou, 1988, p.8).

Baudrillard describes this phenomenon in terms of semiotics. The postmodern object loses its relation between labor and people that give it its meaning, as was the case with modernity. Instead, the postmodern object’s relation to all other objects, or signs, generates its meaning. In order to become a postmodern object, a modern object must be freed from all the logics to which it is linked (Barnard, 2002).

Three main “logics” potentially able to assign meaning to the modern object are use value, exchange value, and the logic of ambivalence. Use value is a functional logic that refers to an object’s practicality in terms of usefulness; when an object is conceived of in terms of a serviceable utensil. Exchange value is an economic logic which refers to an item’s monetary worth or trade value. The logic of ambivalence is a logic of symbolic exchange, and refers to considerations involving interactions. These three logics are able to imbue the modern object with meaning in regards to its utility, its price, and its role in negotiating interactions with others. To become a postmodern object, the modern object must be autonomized from these logics and become a sign. And as a sign, it can only exist to the extent that it is unlike other signs, and that these dissimilarities from other

signs are understood. It is the object's relation to all other signs that produces meaning, and meaning is "entirely a product of coded difference" (Barnard, 2002, p. 164).

Therefore, the postmodern landscape is one that is heavily invested in consumption, as opposed to production; it is the purest stage of capitalism. As stated by Faurschou, postmodern society is a society 'driven to create a perpetual desire for need, for novelty, for endless difference' (Faurschou, 1988, p.82). Thus, it becomes very clear why fashion coincides flawlessly with a postmodern vision (Craik, 1994; Gibson, 2000). According to Baudrillard, it is merely postmodernism's occupation with differentiation that engenders 'beauty.' He remarks that the shift from long skirts to short skirts produces an equivalent fashion value, as would the opposite move, and that both moves would produce an equivalent amount of attractiveness (Barnard, 2002). Put another way, in postmodernity beauty itself is only a function of difference, and fashion is able to present the most outlandish of styles under the guise of beauty, as long as they are sufficiently different from what preceded them. Faurschou adroitly sums up this phenomenon when she says: "The logic of the commodity multiplies indefinitely in the fascination for objects eviscerated of their substance and history, reduced to the pure state of marking a difference" (Faurschou, 1988, p.83).

#### Fashion as an Allegorical Object

The idea of allegory is an especially important concept to postmodern thought. Earlier it was discussed that the modern object had the ability to "retain its capacity for symbolic investment" (Barnard, 2002, p.168). Moreover, the modern object is thought of in terms of its functional value and its economic value. Jameson further commented that the modern object was unique in that it still retained its links to the human labor that went

into its production. These are all ways of imbuing an object with meaning. In her essay, “A Tale of Inscription/Fashion Statements,” Sawchuk argues that such an explanation however, is a gross oversimplification of fashion’s complexity. She draws primarily from the French postmodernist philosopher Jacques Derrida’s ideas on deconstructionism to make the point that thinking of fashion as merely an outcome of capitalism or the result of a social movement is reductionist, and that, in accordance with postmodern thought that vehemently rejects all broad sweeping generalizations, this reductionism needs to be avoided (Barnard, 2002; Sawchuk, 1988).

Sawchuk states, “Neither fashion nor woman can be seen as objects determined simply by two variables, such as sex and class, for they are constructed in this fabric of intertextual relations” (Sawchuk, 1988, p.65). She claims that the discipline of clothing and fashion is intertwined with a variety of other discourses, such as health, beauty, morality, sexuality, nationality, economy, geography, et cetera. Clothing and fashion are then constituted intertextually, as a result of several different discourses buttressing each other. Therefore, reducing a complex phenomenon, like fashion, to a simple idea, such as class, is problematic, for it assumes that the first may be adequately explained by the second (Barnard, 2002).

A major thesis of Derrida is that signs are only meaningful in their relation to other signs, being that each sign represents something different. He refers to relations between these signs as ‘traces.’ In short, a sign’s meaning is produced by its relation to, or its difference from, other signs and by the traces of those differences or relations (Barnard, 2002, p.169). Sawchuk’s point then is that fashion and clothing are meaningless on their own. Only in relation to, for example, the aforementioned

disciplines are they meaningful topics of consideration. Thinking of fashion in this way helps to escape the dangers of reductionism.

The idea of allegory also has ties to history. Allegorical meanings shift over time, depending on changing historical circumstances, and they are without rigid determinations. One cannot assume that pop icon Madonna's adoption of a cross as a fashion accessory was symbolic of her personal relationship with God, as much as one cannot assume that the wearing of high heels signifies a woman's endorsement of a patriarchal sexist economy (Sawchuk, 1988). These fashion items may have been used to shock, disrupt, and/or elucidate to their artificiality and social construction as symbols. In urban consignment shops it is possible to see both trendy youth and the elderly seeking out the same 1940s 'granny' dresses. The former demographic is seeking out retro styles, while the latter still considers these garments to be of an appropriate style for everyday wear. A further irony though is that many of these dresses are vague copies of high fashion dresses that appeared in the 1920s and 1930s from designers such as Coco Chanel and Lucien Lelong. These dresses initially came into the scene as high fashion garments, and not as quaint little dresses (Wilson, 2003). Further, it took about 100 years from the time Levi Strauss' jeans had originated as functional work garments to the time they became a popular garment amongst youths as a symbol of rebellion. What was most significant in the transformation of this item into a fashionable garment was when designer jeans came into the market with prominent labels from names such as Calvin Klein and Gloria Vanderbilt; a mark of conspicuous consumption from items that had such humble beginnings. Perhaps the richest irony in this though was when it became clear that American consumers were eager to pay even more money for European



designer jeans than for the original American garments that they replicated (Braham, 1997). Currently jeans are essentially reference free; they are signs without substance. In sum, allegorical meanings have the propensity to modify themselves and assume new meanings with the passing of time.

Employing these ideas of allegory and intertextuality to analyze fashion opens up the possibilities of interpreting, instead of decoding, the fashion object. According to Freud, decoding implies that there is a system of totality that can account for all signs. Interpreting, however, implies that we are aware of the volatility of an object's meaning (Sawchuk, 1988). Fashion cannot be interpreted as merely a reflection of the current zeitgeist, "for it is a constituent relational element in the fabric of the social" (Sawchuk, 1988, p.73).

#### Polysemy in Fashion

This cognition of an object's unstable meaning leads to the idea of ambiguity in fashion. While it can be argued that the idea of polysemy, or multiple meanings, in fashion is not an entirely new postmodern phenomenon, this discourse can help to clarify and offer some other perspectives in which to understand the arguments associated with Derrida's narrative on intertextuality. The central point in the discourse of the polysemic nature of fashion is that intertextuality determines that the meaning of an object is undecidable; it is simultaneously created and destroyed by its location in those "systems of differences" (Barnard, 2002, p. 173). Derrida refers to this effect as "undecidability." An undecidable is something that is unable to be categorized as either polarity of a dichotomy (i.e. present/absent, cure/poison, hot/cold etc.). To illustrate, a spirit being

fails to be present or absent, or conversely, it is also simultaneously both present and absent (Reynolds, 2002).

An object's meaning is destroyed in the sense that meaning is always a function of other signs that fail to be incessantly present, and therefore, straightforward meanings have the propensity to dissolve. A sign's value is destroyed when "there is no simple presence in terms of which an element may be said to be meaningful" (Barnard, 2002, p.173). It is this link to that which is not present that destroys the meaning of an object once believed to be discernable. This complex phenomenon, that claims that elements are fundamentally ambiguous in terms of their meanings, is considered to be an important element of postmodernism.

To elaborate on this notion, in his aperçu *Fashion as Communication*, Malcolm Barnard cites Lee Wright's essay "Objectifying Gender: The Stiletto Heel." Wright's analysis of the heel adroitly demonstrates how a fashion item whose meaning seems to be fixed is actually an undecidable object whose meaning is both created and dissipated by its relation to other discourses. Specifically, its ambiguity lies in whether this shoe is to be thought of as a symbol of liberation, or as a symbol of sexual oppression. The stiletto heel is intertextually related to several discourses in unique ways, for example, medical, moral, fashionable, and technical discourses. All of these conceive of the stiletto in different ways. Depending on fashion's cyclical nature, the stiletto heel is often considered to be a fashionable shoe. At the same time it is also derided by the medical profession for causing spinal injuries and foot deformation. Moral leaders also ridicule the shoe for the stance it forces the wearer to assume in them—the jutting of the breasts and bottom is considered uncouthly sexually provocative. Moreover, industry and

technology have had a say in the discourse of the stiletto heel, as it has forced these sectors to develop adequate flooring that is able to support the concentrated pressure exerted by the heel and its wearer (Barnard, 2002).

Thus, the meaning of the postmodern object is produced intertextually—in terms of its relation to other objects and in terms of its places within various discourses. Wright's main point though is that the stiletto may be viewed as an object of liberation and rebellion, as opposed to an object of subjugation. However, it is concluded that both of these values co-exist, at the same time and in conjunction with an assortment of other meanings bred by the variety of discourses in which this object is placed. The stiletto is both simultaneously considered to be a badge of women's progression and rejection of patriarchal norms, and also thought of as a device to confine women to an inferior social order. The meaning of the stiletto is therefore polysemic, ambiguous and undecidable (Barnard, 2002). Barnard then shrewdly concludes that, if the stiletto heel may be presented as an undecidable object, when its meaning seems to already be rigidly fixed in terms of sex, gender and its exploitation of women, then clearly all fashion items have the propensity of being undecidable objects (Barnard, 2002).

#### Fashion Cycles

'I shop therefore I am.' These were the words scrawled on the famous 1987 billboard piece designed by American conceptual artist Barbara Kruger which so insightfully commented on the nature of inexorable consumption that marked the eighties. In fashion, as soon as one item is depleted, another item immediately replaces it, and this cycle continues to perpetuate itself. Another name for this fashion cycle is

built-in or planned obsolescence. “This cycle is the desire for endless difference” (Barnard, 2000, p. 165).

As previously discussed, the postmodern landscape is characterized by an ever increasingly rapid beat of desire, and an insatiable appetite for all that is new and current. Postmodernism exemplifies how excessive and destructive Western consumerist culture is, and yet simultaneously it aestheticizes this horror into something beautiful and desirable to consume. Thus critics have commented that fashion is said to have no real meaning beyond merely serving as a means to an end, and that postmodernism is just a euphemism for vulgar consumerism and a trivialization of gratuitous excess (Craik, 1994; Wilson, 1992).

Perhaps the most significant occurrence in precipitating this rapid and constant change in fashion was the rise of the courtier in mid-nineteenth century Paris. After the emergence of the independent courtier, fashions tended to remain in vogue for only about a decade or so. Although this time period seems extraordinarily long in comparison to the contemporary shelf life of fashions today, which is sometimes seasonal at best, it is important to remember that prior to the courtier it was customary for fashions to remain stylish for upwards of several decades. Some of the forces responsible for giving impetus to this rapid change include the deterioration of class boundaries, increasing consumer affluence, the materialization of fashionable ready-to-wear clothing, and the crucial role the media plays in disseminating information on a global scale (Braham, 1997; Davis 1992). In turn, these forces have helped to cast absurdity on the notion that fashion continues to be dispersed from some elitist core, such as Paris or Milan; or that a single “look” will predominate, such as Dior’s New Look. Instead we now find ourselves

confronted with new approaches of fashionability in a far more broadly dispersed information age that come from a range of different groups, places and designers. Thus, postmodernism is an age of multiple fashions systems, where fashion “moves up, down and along from a variety of starting positions and in several directions, rather than a single system in which fashion only moves in one direction, ‘trickling down’ from the elite to the majority” (Braham, 1997, p.145).

In her essay, “The Fashion Apparatus and the Deconstruction of Postmodern Subjectivity” Julia Emberley defines fashion as the “production of seasonal products for mass consumption” (Emberley, 1988, p.47). She states that fashion is dependant on a negative reaction to the products it provides to its consumers, relying on its own refutation so that it is able to (re)produce desires that will seemingly satisfy its customers. It is fashion’s role to attach an air of undecidability and self-importance to itself, and to ensure that an adequate amount of boredom or distaste for itself will soon arise. By means of this built-in or planned obsolescence a plethora of new items can be immediately introduced that promise to “liberate” the consumer from those old burdens, and provide them with new and exciting choices. Therefore, the postmodern fashion cycle is a contradiction, claiming to endow one with the ability to form a unique, individual sense of self, and yet simultaneously impelling you to conform to the market homogeneity of seasonal products (Emberley, 1988, p.49).

#### Rejection of Fashion Authorities

In the seventies and eighties it became something of a banality in fashion journalism to comment on the lack of a single silhouette, or a distinct look in fashion, but rather an existence of fashions and an obligatory pluralism of clothing styles. A plethora

of evidence exists in the verbal discourse of fashion publications from this period that testifies to this new sense of liberty in fashion.

Besides an absence of a prevailing silhouette, the practice of the “trickle-up” theory in fashion also gives evidence of a rejection of authority in the fashion establishment. During these decades, street fashion also significantly influenced high fashion and mainstream fashion. This is exemplified when designers in the late seventies and early eighties, like Zandra Rhodes, Vivienne Westwood and Flora Kung, took elements of London punk styles and incorporated them into their own collections. And it could also be said that the popularity of retro styles shows a rejection of authority, as it does decisively displace the leading role of the fashion designer as a fashion dictator. This enables the impetus of change to come from below, instead of from the designer above (Leitch, 1996).

The marked popularity of donning casual apparel for almost any occasion further bears witness to a denunciation of authority in social mores (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). In the 1980s, there was a marked rise in the popularity of high-end designers who were known for their casual wear designs, for example Anne Klein, Geoffrey Beene, Donna Karen and Calvin Klein. These designers abetted in making casual wear increasingly acceptable and stylish for all occasions—day and evening wear.

Lastly, a fundamental characteristic of the postmodern social landscape that gives further credence to this denunciation of fashion authority is its celebration of all that is kitsch, and the meshing of high culture with popular culture (Wilson, 1992; Leicht, 1996; Barnard, 2000; Muggleton, 2000; Kaiser, 1997; Evans & Thornton, 1989). The crumbling away of these aesthetic divisions allows for a politics of strategic reinscription

that strips power away from those who traditionally held it and places it with those that belong to disenfranchised and marginalized groups. Further, since postmodernism takes popular culture seriously and questions whether there is any type of authority over art versus craft, this has allowed for the destruction of barriers and the reassessment of areas once considered solely feminine (and thus, less important). Consequently, female writers now have a forum to comment on areas once thought of as too frivolous to be taken seriously, fashion for instance, and offer up a feminist viewpoint (Wilson, 1992).

#### Discordant Cultural and Ethnic Groups

It can be said that the greater exposure of nonconformist socio-political groups can be explicated by postmodern culture's penchant to reject authority (Morgado, 1996). Cultural and ethnic groups with conflicting ideals are an important characteristic of the postmodern social landscape. This encompasses subcultural dress, as well as the dress of ethnic minorities, women, lesbians and gay men, who found new opportunities to assert, find or retrieve their identities during this time period. Disempowered groups strategically manipulate the codes of mainstream fashions to express their own unique socio-political values (Leitch, 1996). Those who adopt oppositional dress show that they use sartorial adornment to their advantage to create meaning and find their place in the world. No longer do these individuals blindly conform to the trickle-down theory. Rather, dress is used as a means to buttress class barriers and emphasize differences that go against the grain of mainstream culture.

The counter-culture youth style of hip hop fashion is an example of this. The 1980s saw a return to black consciousness that developed from inner-city youth and from the rap artists featured on MTV (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). U.S. hip hop fashion

emerged during this time period; a meshing of styles that draws from urban music, dance, speech and clothing (Leitch, 1996). Hip hop fashion proved to be defensive, offering protection in a hostile milieu, and also allowing for the assertion of a strong identity. It challenged the social hierarchy by wearing designer clothing with exposed price tags still attached, wearing caps off center, leaving shoelaces untied, sporting oversized clothing, and the use of large, flashy gold jewelry. This is an alternative form of conspicuous consumption that serves as a representation of pecuniary success and a symbolic display of the redistribution of wealth to marginalized groups (Leitch, 1996).

Moreover, the wearing of exclusively black hairstyles was popular during this period. Hip hop culture originated the fade, a cut that was short on the sides and long on top, where oftentimes words or designs were shaved onto the scalp. Dreadlocks and afro hairstyles also reemerged during the eighties as fashionable hairstyles for African Americans. In this way, barriers were reinforced and differences were illustrated, as these hairstyles cannot be successfully copied by other races (Tortora & Eubank, 1998; Wilson, 1992).

In the same light, in the late 1970's and early 1980's punks endeavored to illustrate their estrangement and alienation from society through their clothing. The punk philosophy adopted a position of autonomous and anarchic originality, which initially resulted in an anti-fashion stance. Varied pieces were gathered from thrift stores, army surplus stores, and sex boutiques. Clothing was intentionally ripped and stained, decorated with vulgar designs, and accessorized with safety pins, razor blades and toilet chains. Hair was dyed in bright colors of red, green and yellow and outrageously styled into mohawks (Breward, 2003). Unlike the hippie culture which preceded them, it was



important that nothing look natural for the punks. In this way punk styles went contrary to mainstream fashion which always attempts to naturalize the strange instead of accentuating it (Wilson, 2003).

It is often all too easy to encode the oppositional dress of punks as an expression of nihilism in a bleak postmodern society. However, Wilson insightfully points out that dressing in such a shocking, rebellious manner can also be seen as a way for youths to develop an identity, build self-confidence, and create a sense of self amongst a subcultural group that offered support (Wilson, 2003).

Dress is very invested in gender and has habitually been used to challenge the demarcations of gender. Some have argued that postmodernism in fashion is liberating for women. Because of the availability of such a wide assortment of fashionable styles, women are able to construct a meaningful identity by means of their clothing, instead of just blindly following the latest styles thrust upon them from an elitist fashion core (Crane, 2000; Wilson, 2001). Moreover, fashion is known to playfully cross traditional gender boundaries, expose stereotypes, and reveal society's artificial construction of femininity (Wilson, 2001).

While not an entirely new phenomenon, it could also be said that women chose to assert their identities in the 1980s by taking on definite elements of masculine dress and incorporating them into their own dress. By 1976 it was estimated that one-half of American mothers held secular work positions outside of the home (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). This gradually changed women's traditional shopping patterns as they now bought different outfits intended for either work or play. Items such as neck ties, sharp-line blazers, tailored blouses, large-shoulder pads, knee-length skirts, and vests became

essential items in virtually every woman's wardrobe. The fashion press named this shift in women's styles towards more masculine clothing as "unisex clothing," and commentators attributed this shift to changes in traditional gender roles (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Women in the secular work force enjoyed these styles because it helped them to escape from the inaccurate pejorative stereotypes associated with the female gender, such as defenselessness, ineptitude and subservience, and abetted them in assuming a more serious and powerful role. A review of fashion journalism during the eighties shows the use of terms such as "man-style tailoring," "the menswear look," "big, square jackets," and "strongly-defined shoulders" to describe this new line of unisex clothing for women that was heavily influenced by the male wardrobe (Steele, 1997).

While women's and men's clothing in the workplace were nearly identical, fashions outside of the workplace were also practically interchangeable. This included casual clothing such as jeans, t-shirts, tailored shirts, sneakers and jogging suits that were popular wear for both genders (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Therefore, along with major alterations in lifestyles and social roles for men and women, also came the evaporation of taboos associated with the wearing of clothing traditionally intended solely for men or women. The August 1984 issue of *American Vogue* stated that "the 'androgynous' look is everywhere." Although often times this look was not so much androgynous as it was masculine. Art historian Anne Hollander's essay "The New Androgyny" further noted that the new idyllic form for both the male and female body was large shoulders, slim hips, and muscular arms, abdomens and buttocks. Full, curvaceous figures were no longer fashionable for either gender, and a progression towards an ideal unisex figure seemed to be the aim of both genders (Steele, 1997).

While some designers continued to conform to hegemonic norms that dictate how women's sexuality and femininity ought to be expressed, avant-garde and postmodernist designers worked to redefine female sexuality or concealed female sexuality altogether (Crane, 2000). Circa the 1980s, many fashion designers created androgynous looks, or looks that hinted at bisexuality, incorporating gender blurring techniques into their clothing collections at an unprecedented level and frequency for the time. Fashion designer Thierry Mugler constructed hard silhouettes for women made up of broad shoulders, cinched waists and high heels; a look referred to as "butch glamour" (Steele, 1997, p.135). Correspondingly, a study of fashion illustrations in periodicals of this time frame reveals a large number of photographs depicting muscular female models in dominating and hostile stances, oftentimes towards other male models. These models came to be known as "glamazon." Their powerful and strong poses were supposed to be indicative of the new liberated woman, whose influence and authority rivaled that of a man's. However, these provocative spreads were often misread as the erotic fantasies of dominatrix women (Steele, 1997).

French avant-garde fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier is perhaps the leading designer of subversive, gender-ambiguous fashions. "A woman, like a man, can be feminine," he said. He made his most definitive statement on the subject with his 1985 collection "And God Created Man"—a pastiche of Roger Vadim's classic 1957 film "Et Dieu Créa La Femme," where he featured skirts as menswear. His womenswear line that year, "Wardrobe for Two," also challenged traditional viewpoints on sex and gender by offering androgynous clothing for women. Gaultier commented that his collection offered equality of sex appeal. He remarked, "Saying that this fabric or that color is for a

boy and another color or fabric is for a girl is as ridiculous as saying this vegetable can only be eaten by a boy or this drink is only suitable for a girl. It is so silly; but we do it all the time” (Victoria & Albert, 2005). Gender theorist Judith Butler suggests that the idea of gender is merely communicated through social performances involving, for instance, the wearing of certain types of dress, the use of different types of cosmetics, or the implementation of different types of body modifications, but the self is not inherently masculine or feminine. Therefore, she proposes that society’s vacillation between established binary gender grouping that is a distinguishing trait of postmodernism may lead to the eventual disintegration of norms imposing compulsory heterosexuality (Butler, 1990).

Clothing has also offered the opportunity for lesbians and gay men to assert their identity. The clothing preferences of gay subcultures have offered a parallel commentary on heterosexual gender norms, and has in turn influenced the clothing of heterosexual men and women (Crane, 2000). In the eighties, some lesbians returned to the exaggerated butch and femme styles reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s club and bar scene. During this time too, gay men in America developed an elaborate sartorial coding system based on the bodily placement of keys, handkerchiefs and earrings (Wilson, 2003).

However, while many see this retrieval and assertion of the identities of marginalized groups as empowering and as a revitalization of our culture, some postmodernists tend to take a bleaker outlook on the situation, claiming that the real issues become obscured by capitalism’s tendency to reclaim the status quo (Morgado, 1996; Wilson, 2003). In accordance with Marxist theory, capitalism has the propensity to

silence those with alternative political agendas that go against the mainstream. Thus fashion is often used as an instrument of capitalism to quell any dissident voices by somehow marketing the political agendas of discordant groups and transforming these into harmless commodities (Morgado, 1996). Subversive dress is integrated into the collections of fashion designers and claimed as the latest thing. Hip hop dress is ransacked by the fashion business and marketed towards white suburban youth, purposely ripped and safety-pinned styles become mass-marketed towards the general public, political slogans are printed on t-shirts to become the newest fad, racially diverse models are strategically selected to pose in the newest fashion spreads under the guise of a racially harmonious societal structure, and the phrase 'black is beautiful' is used to merchandise lingerie (Morgado, 1996). Serious issues are adopted by fashion, commercialized into aesthetic commodities, and marketed towards consumers, as though all former concerns have been resolved (Morgado, 1996).

#### Contradictive Semiotics in Dress

Perhaps the most obvious element of postmodern influence of fashion culture is the perplexity of signs in dress, or the combination of pieces from different styles to create a new style that often loses the substance of its initial or traditional significance, producing a schizophrenic message via one's dress. Fashion writer Jennifer Craik presents a view of postmodernity as involving the surge of free-floating signs (Craik, 1994). Examples include popular 1980s styles such as wearing a tailored suit over a retro t-shirt, pairing combat boots with sheer dresses, wearing leather motorcycle jackets with ballerina tutus, or lacing Doctor Martens shoes with sumptuous ribbons. This could also involve the use of signs that have little reference to their traditional significance, as when

designers draw inspiration from traditional dress, like that of monks and nuns (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Art historian Anne Hollander has explained this confusion of signs as follows: “A postmodern person...has learned that not only may disparate wardrobes cohabit in one person’s closet...but they may now be (re)combined...old denim and fresh spangles or pale chiffon and black combat boots are worn not just in quick succession but together. The new freedom of fashion in the last quarter-century has been taken up as a chance not to create new forms, but to play more or less outrageously with all the tough and solid ones...[with] a pulsating tide of mixed references” (Anne Hollander quoted in Wilson, 2003, p.254).

#### Recycling of Past Styles

The terms “pastiche” and “bricolage” are popular buzz words that spawn across the diction of postmodern writers. Classically, pastiche referred to literary, artistic, musical, or architectural work that was inspired by the work of past artists. Pastiche can now be defined as a stylistic replication without parody’s ironic ulterior motives; it is a straight imitation of past styles. Frederic Jameson makes extensive use of the concept of pastiche in his essay, “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Capitalism.” His thesis is that the entire world is pastiche, a replication of copies for which there exists no original (Barnard, 2003). Consequently, cultural producers can only create what has already existed; history becomes nothing but a varied assortment of past artifacts (Barnard, 2003).

Pastiche is a major characteristic of postmodernism, and it is easy to see how it correlates so nicely with fashion. As postmodernist philosopher, Jean Baudrillard commented, “fashion is always retro” (Barnard, 2003, p.177). In this same light, former

*New York Times* fashion columnist, Woody Hochswender, commented, “The cycles in fashion get shorter and shorter. How many times have the 60s been revived since the 60s? They’re never out long enough to be completely out. Soon all the decades will overlap dangerously. Soon everything will simultaneously be out” (Hochswender, 1991, quoted in Davis, 1992, p.107). While it can be argued that designers have borrowed largely from the past before the period generally defined as postmodern, Wilson points out that this imitation of the past has radically escalated during postmodernity. Included in this imitation of past styles is also the adoption of ethnic styles and textiles, as these too are objects from an earlier, simpler time (Crane, 2000).

Fashion has often been criticized for thoughtlessly plundering past styles with little or no reference to what these past styles mean. A classic example of this is when French fashion designer Martine Sitbon introduced ‘retrochic’ versions of 1970s fashions in his 1989 collection, when those fashions were themselves a pastiche of the 1940’s (Wilson, 1992). Additionally, one of Belgian designer’s Martin Margiela collections was dedicated to producing exact replicas of styles that emerged decades earlier. These, however, were taken from collections lacking in prestige including the complete wardrobe of a 1960s doll, eighteenth century ceremonial dress, and private school uniforms (Crane, 2000). Moreover, the eighties experienced a revival of several past styles, bringing back to fashion turn of the century leg-of-mutton sleeves, bustles and crinolines of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dropped-waist chemises of the 1920’s, bias-cut dresses of the 1930’s, the broad shoulders of the 1940’s, merry widow style bustiers of the fifties, and sheath dresses and mini skirts of the 1960’s, just to name a few (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). In the 1980s, “avant-garde fashion became a field of parody, new looks which

were also old in their reference to history, the cinema, traditional and folk culture, and to fashion itself” (Evans & Thornton, p.60, 1989).

Thinking of postmodern fashion as pastiche, as a mere recycling of past styles, may explain the confusion of the fashion press who continued to comment on the lack of a single predominant style or silhouette. The consumer’s insatiable fascination with all that is nostalgic had resulted in a haphazard plundering of past styles that all simultaneously overlap each other without regard to historical continuity.

Bricolage is another major characteristic of postmodernism. Bricolage constructs meaning utilizing that which has already been used in the past. While both draw from past materials and styles, bricolage is different from pastiche in that it creates new meanings with these objects, whereas pastiche does not. Bricolage is a French term that literally means to “do-it-yourself;” it involves problem solving by exploring, using and manipulating cultural signs in an ironic way so that the end product differs from its original intended meaning. Therefore, it is the process of taking everyday objects, not always meant to be worn, and using them for sartorial adornment. Examples of this aesthetic included the popular usage of lavatory chains, safety pins, jam jar lids and computer printer tractor feeds as accessories in the 1980’s. By utilizing ordinary objects at one’s disposal in new and creative ways, the bricoleur essentially uses these items to show others via visual communication that he or she has a different perspective on society (Kaiser, 1997).

The postmodern ethic of the “recycling of signs” may be the result of an ambivalent attitude of contemporary life; having a “nostalgic longing” for a simpler past, and yet not wanting to give up our current modern-day conveniences (Kaiser, 1997, p.



407). Retro fashion inserts its wearer into a complex system of cultural and historical references. In the 1980s, hippie fashions of the 1960s, such as tie dye t-shirts and peace sign jewelry, made a return to the market as fashionable clothing. In the sixties, tie dye was popular because it could be cheaply and individually produced, and thus those who adhered to the leftist political agenda of that period were able to avoid what they considered to be a homogenized mass culture; it was a rejection of mass produced goods and the establishment. The youth of the 1980s, however, were unaware of the political connotations once associated with these fashion items. Rather it was the sheer look of these styles that was desired, and not the ideological ethic it once represented. These styles were removed from their traditional historic context, and instead worn in novel appearance contexts that typify postmodern aesthetics (Kaiser, 1997).

#### The Selected Postmodern Characteristics

After a thorough study of secondary sources on the topic of postmodernism, and on the subject matter of postmodernism's relation to fashion, four major characteristics were determined as being representative of postmodernistic influences on dress. These were a (1) a denunciation of fashion authorities, (2) gender blurring in dress, (3) a confusion of signs in dress, and (4) a recycling of past dress styles.

#### Denunciation of Fashion Authorities

The broad characteristic of a "Denunciation of Fashion Authorities" encompasses four sub-traits: (a) evidence of a rejection of fashion authorities and/or the absence of a predominant silhouette in fashion within the verbal discourse of fashion magazines, (b) the support of a trickle-up theory as manifest through "street-influence" on mainstream and haute couture fashions, (c) recognition on the part of the fashion press of a rejection

of time-established social mores by the donning of casual apparel for all occasions, and (d) the meshing of high cultures with popular cultures, substantiating postmodernism's destruction of once exclusive aesthetic divisions and its celebration of the kitsch.

**Absence of Fashion Authorities or a Prevailing Silhouette:** A rejection of fashion authorities and the absence of a prevailing silhouette involves the disappearance of a dominating silhouette in fashion, or the evaporation of a single popular look that prevails for several seasons. This postmodern characteristic entails the acceptance and recognition by the fashion press that such a logical linear progression of fashion was defunct, and that a postmodern era supports a simultaneous existence of several clothing styles and silhouettes, and a new liberty in fashion.

**Street-influence:** Street-influence refers to the unprecedented shift that occurred in the early eighties in the relationship between high fashion and street fashion. It is the incorporation of street styles into the designs of high fashion items or mainstream clothing. Whereas in prior decades it seemed to be that high fashion despised street fashion and subcultural styles for being crude or amateurish, in the 1980s high fashion liberally sampled from street fashion and was highly influenced by subcultural dress. Essentially, the function of subcultural dress as a deviant form of expression lost its rebellious voice as mainstream and high-end fashion increasingly began to look to the street for inspiration for its newest collections. The symbiosis between street fashion and high fashion seemed to be complete by mid-decade. "Fashion was fashionable, and authentic gestures of resistance and refusal appeared to belong to the past" (Evans & Thornton, 1989, p. 75).

Casual Apparel for all Occasions: The social acceptability and popularity of casual clothing for all occasions gives further support to a denunciation of fashion authorities. This involves the written testimony within the chosen publications that it was increasingly acceptable and stylish to wear casual dress as formal wear, as well as for day wear.

Meshing of high culture with pop/low culture: The meshing of high culture with pop culture, or low culture, is a crucial postmodern characteristic that gives further credence to a rejection of authority indicative of the postmodern social landscape. “In postmodern culture, the categories of worth and worthlessness are easily inverted” (Evans & Thornton, 1989, p. 62). Postmodernism is said to have obliterated the once mutually exclusive categories of art and craft, of unique skill and mass culture (Wilson, 1992). Thus, a celebration of pop culture and the kitsch has been noted along with the collapse of distinctive aesthetic divisions.

### Gender Blurring

The postmodern characteristic of “Gender Blurring” in fashion was further divided into (a) masculine or unisex clothing, and (b) androgynous dress.

Masculine and unisex clothing: Masculine or unisex clothing is the incorporation of traditional menswear items into women’s apparel; essentially it is a feminization of masculine attire. Oftentimes these clothing items are socially acceptable as interchangeable dress pieces between male and female wearers. Scholars have worked to identify different modes of dress marked as being either feminine or masculine in nature within given time periods and within different societal structures. A literature review carried out by Workman and Johnson (1993) worked to classify different types of gender-

oriented dress according to twentieth century Western standards. Their findings showed that masculine attributes associated with dress tended to include sharp lines; weighty, coarse, and/or stiff textures; and large, distinct, and/or bold prints. Feminine attributes associated with dress tended to include sinuous lines; supple, smooth and/or lightweight textures; and patterned textiles. Findings further showed that men's clothing generally tended to be roomier, while women's clothing was apt to be more constrictive and conforming to the body. Lastly, Workman and Johnson alluded to the widespread cultural belief that men and women should look very different from one another; that being a woman involves being "feminine" and appearing as much unlike a man as possible. If an outfit contained at least three traditionally masculine clothing pieces, or three or more of the masculine attributes associated with dress according to Workman and Johnson (1993), it was categorized as being masculine or unisex clothing. For example, if a model wore a sharp-lined blazer, tailored-shirt and a tie paired with a skirt, hose and pumps, this model's apparel would be characterized as Masculine/Unisex dress, for it features at least three inherently masculine items.

Androgynous clothing: The donning of androgynous clothing is a figurative transcendence between the binary opposition of the sexes that simultaneously unites and confuses the traits characteristic of the male and female body (Evans & Thornton, 1989). Androgynous clothing is different from masculine or unisex clothing in that it effectively conceals traditional "femininity" and/or female sexuality, and presents the female figure as one that is sexually ambiguous and interchangeable to that of a man's figure. Androgyny in fashion is a subversive act that combines conventional facets of male and female attire for the purpose of producing an ambiguous gender identity (Kaiser, 1997).

Kaiser attributes the phenomenon of gender blurring to the fact that we belong to a postmodern time period, where traditionally distinct categories have given way to merging into one another (Kaiser, 1990a).

### Confusion of Signs

“Confusion of Signs” as a significant postmodern characteristic was broken down into two additional parts: (a) a combination of discordant sartorial pieces, and (b) an evidence of inspiration of traditional dress on mainstream and high fashion clothing.

Combination of discordant pieces: A combination of discordant pieces in dress involves the mixing and matching of elements from different styles to create a unique new style that is often ambiguous in meaning. This postmodern characteristic has the tendency to produce a schizophrenic message via one’s dress by combining various clothing items that produce different messages and ironically contradict one another.

Inspiration from traditional dress: Inspiration from traditional dress has to do with the ironic use of signs that retain little reference to their established meanings. This involves the adoption of traditional clothing pieces from, for example, religious groups, military garb, ceremonial dress, or professional uniforms, and incorporating them into mainstream or couture fashions.

### Recycling of Past Styles

The major postmodern characteristic of a “Recycling of Past Styles” was subdivided into (a) an evidence of pastiche in dress, and (b) the employment of bricolage in sartorial adornment.

Pastiche: Pastiche is a straight stylistic imitation of past styles devoid of any ironic sentiments. It is the revival of past fashions. This also includes the appropriation

of traditional ethnic clothing and textiles, as these too are representative of artifacts from an earlier time.

Bricolage: Bricolage is the adoption of everyday objects not necessarily intended to be worn, but manipulated by the wearer to be used for sartorial adornment. Unlike pastiche, bricolage assigns new meaning to items by using and combining them in ways in which they were not originally intended. “By creating and constructing unique appearances, individuals can move away from conventional rules of appearance and create new looks or forms of expression” (Kaiser, 1997, p.470).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The method of research for this historical study followed the format of content analysis. Therefore, the topics of historical research and content analysis are briefly discussed below, followed by a detailed account of the research procedures.

#### Historical Research

History is a dynamic process with a diverse, fluid, ever-changing scholarly structure that permits us the opportunity to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the world and our individual selves. Instead of merely presenting a static representation of the past, historians work to uncover new approaches, sources, methodologies and exegeses to conceptualize the past for a forever advancing present (Leedy, 1997).

For instance, political turbulence and shifts in demography that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have moved some scholars to inquire about the past in novel ways, resulting in a new form of historical consciousness. The attempts of historical revisionists' to reclaim and develop the once overlooked history of minorities and women have often required the act of working with political movements towards the achievement of civil human rights for marginalized groups and socioeconomic egalitarianism. This has evolved into a modification of women's and minority history with a blending of the some of the methods and avenues inherent to social history (Brundage, 1997).

## Postmodernism

An even newer field of history than an incorporation of women and minorities is that of postmodernism. The essence of postmodernist analysis is “deconstructionism.” “A historical deconstructionist analysis seeks to determine how forms of identity (national, social, gender, ethnic) are constructed by the various ‘discourses’ that are generated by a given society” (Brundage, 1997, p.12). These discourses can be comprised of anything from literary works to popular media, and to nonverbal forms of discourse, such as architecture or an array of images. The aim of deconstructionism is to peel away the layers of facades that these discourses possess, to eventually reveal an authentic core that exposes them as utensils that serve the purpose of justifying the oppression of marginalized groups. This method is referred to as postmodern, for it dares to question the legitimacy of “modern” beliefs prevailing ever since the Age of Enlightenment; that human establishments are guided by reason, and that these establishments have become progressively more altruistic (Brundage, 1997).

Postmodernism has had a great impact and has been heavily integrated into the discipline of women’s history and gender studies, but still remains a divisive topic among other academics. Some claim that the concentration of postmodernism on historical oppression is too heavily influenced by political agendas, and thus has the effect of distorting historical accuracy and chipping away at scholarly rigor. Others assert that the postmodern nature of treating everything with a sort of unstable malleability results in a type of esoteric nihilism. However, when used responsibly and selectively, the postmodern approach can be a valuable instrument in the study of history (Brundage, 1997).



## The Nature and Variety of Historical Sources

There are two sources of historical data: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are considered to be the quintessence of historical research. Written primary sources include manuscript sources and published sources. Historically speaking, a manuscript is a handwritten or typed document that has not been reproduced in significant amounts for the general public. On the other hand, published sources include both manuscript materials, and materials that were intended from their inception to be published and publicly disseminated. Published manuscript materials (i.e. letters, diaries, etc.) are materials that were usually initially intended as personal and private, but later were published posthumously. Periodicals and newspapers are examples of primary sources that were intended from the onset to be printed for the public. However, it is crucial to note when using sources such as periodicals and newspapers, that these publications often contain subtle biases that the authors and editors never meant to expose. It is important to consider that we are relying upon an author's, editor's, or photographer's personal account, opinion, or perspective which could all very possibly be laced with the biases of that individual's vantage point, prejudices, and collegial influences. Taking the above into consideration, it is essential to read and interpret the material in two ways. First, the researcher must empathize with the contemporaries of the period in question, and attempt to envision the world as they did. This, of course, requires some knowledge of the time period. Secondly, the researcher must at the same time see things through the objective, critical lens of a current-day academic and pose questions that the people of that time period did not ask, or were unable to even inquire about (Brundage, 1997; Leedy, 1997).

The other source of historical data comes from secondary works. These include conference papers, dissertations, theses, articles, essays, and books—works published after the occurrence of a historical time or event. The aspiration of the historical researcher, however, is to get as close to the original experience as possible in an attempt to reconstruct the actual event as accurately as possible. Thus, to ensure the integrity of the research and buttress its reliability, it is preferable that the historical researcher solely utilize primary sources when in search for historical veracity (Brundage, 1997; Leedy, 1997).

Secondary sources were used in this study to develop a background knowledge on postmodernism and its related theories in an effort to establish a firm foundation for this research project. Fashion periodicals were the primary sources utilized in this study to collect data on what was being offered as fashionable apparel during the 1980s.

#### Content Analysis

The research method of content analysis has been extensively utilized in the field of historic costume (Mead & Pederson, 1995; Paff & Lakner, 1997; Lynch, Michelman, & Hegland, 1998). Content analysis is a research technique that allows one to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying the marked and latent content of a body of communication material through a classification, tabulation, quantitative analysis and evaluation of specified characteristics and themes in order to describe social behavior or test a hypothesis about it. There exists a plethora of potential data for content analysis including, but not limited to, television shows, movies, books, songs, and periodicals (Albrecht, Bahr, & Chadwick, 1984).

Three distinct components comprise the body of human communication materials: the message, the sender, and the audience. Sometimes, messages are analyzed to provide inferences about the sender of the communication. Other times the effect the message had on the audience is studied by researchers. Most often though, content analysis is used to describe or make inferences about social change, since the media of communication is an excellent source for studying societal values, beliefs, and behaviors (Albrecht, Bahr, & Chadwick, 1984).

The benefits of content analysis as a research method are that it is relatively (monetarily) inexpensive, it does not impose on human subjects, the communication materials for content analysis are generally readily available, and it allows the researcher to study populations to whom he or she is denied direct access to. One potential disadvantage of content analysis is the difficulty of finding the desired messages relevant to the researcher's project. Additionally, another disadvantage lies in the potential biases that lie within the chosen media of communication. For example, an editor for a periodical may purposely or unconsciously impose their own individual philosophies on articles they personally edit, or this bias may be applied to whether an article or spread is accepted for publication or not. Thus, the chosen source of communication has the potential for being biased and not being fully representative of the population in question. However, the available data, biased or not, may be all that the researcher has at their disposal. The best alternative then is for the author to acknowledge that these biases may be unavoidably present (Albrecht, Bahr, & Chadwick, 1984; Gross & Sheth, 1989).

The steps of content analysis involve: (1) stating the research problem, (2) identifying the communication medium(s), (3) establishing a time frame and selecting a

sample from the population, (4) selecting the key characteristics which are to be identified within the communication(s), (5) coding those characteristics within the medium of communication, and lastly (6) analyzing the data and reporting one's findings (Albrecht, Bahr, & Chadwick, 1984).

Mead and Pederson's 1995 research article, "West African Apparel Textiles Depicted in Selected Magazines from 1960-1979: Application of Cultural Authentication," primarily influenced the content analysis methodology implemented in this research project. The defined objectives and methodology utilized in their study to determine the extent of West African influence on textiles and apparel in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s, proved to be a major source of aid in helping the researcher to hone the objectives for this research project and to refine its procedures for data collection on the extent of postmodernism's influence on fashion throughout the 1980s.

#### Steps to Achieve the Objectives

The rather broad scope of the major objective—to determine whether or not the phenomenon of postmodernism was an influence on the fashions of the 1980s—permitted the implementation of an inductive method by allowing the data to indicate if any clothing features demonstrative of a postmodernistic influence were present during the selected time frame (Cosbey, Damhorst, & Farrell-Beck, 2003). Longitudinal content analysis was used to collect and categorize the data of postmodern characteristics in fashion as portrayed in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* throughout the 1980s. In order to objectively and systematically code the material culture featured in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* periodicals, a checklist of the four representative postmodern characteristics was formulated. These were a (1) a denunciation of fashion authorities, (2) gender blurring in

dress, (3) a confusion of signs in dress, and (4) a recycling of past dress styles. Every page that was featured as a fashion spread or a fashion editorial in the magazines was reviewed for marked and latent content concerning the selected postmodern characteristics. If one or more of the postmodern characteristics appeared in a text or illustration it was noted for future analysis.

Periodicals were selected to be used as the data source for this research project because they are resolutely dated (Mead & Pederson, 1995). Further, since fashion periodicals are apt to prehend the general zeitgeist of the times and echo popular trends in styles (as promoted by the perspective of the publication's editor), fashion illustrations and verbal discourse were examined from the chosen publications and used as information sources on what was being offered and proposed in the marketplace as fashionable clothing for women.

*Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* periodicals were specifically selected to be used in this research project because they both met several important criteria. The two publications cater to the demographic of women in the upper-middle to upper socio-economic class, target a fairly large age bracket, feature an ample amount of fashion illustrations, and were widely distributed throughout the time of interest. Thus, taking the above into consideration will allow one to reasonably deduce that these periodicals were representative of what apparel was being presented to the public as fashionable.

Although the ideal in research is to examine and analyze the whole population, a scarcity of resources and time constraints placed limitations on the researcher. When utilizing magazines as a primary source in research, it is common to sample from a select number of issues from each year (Mead & Pederson, 1995). This study sampled every

issue within every even numbered year of *Vogue* throughout the eighties, and every issue within every odd numbered year of *Harper's Bazaar* in the 1980s. Thus, more than one periodical source was used for the sample selection in an effort to compensate for any biases that may occur with the styles featured in any one publication (Mead & Pederson, 1995; Cosby, Damhorst, & Farrell-Beck, 2003). A total of 120 periodical issues were analyzed (60 issues from *Vogue* and 60 issues from *Harper's Bazaar*). Monthly fashion spreads and fashion editorials from the two periodicals were solely considered for review in this study, as the purpose of these periodical features is primarily to communicate fashion ideas to its readers.

#### Procedures

The procedures for this research project involved a six-step process: a comprehensive review of writings on postmodernism in attempt to establish criteria of how postmodern characteristics can be identified in fashionable clothing, checklist development, identification of postmodern characteristics in the two selected fashion-forward publications of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* via content analysis, and data analysis. The research method was uncomplicated and deliberately unsophisticated as it was the most general features which were of interest to the researcher. The procedure steps are clearly delineated below.

1. A review of secondary sources was synthesized that attempted to define and discuss the phenomenon of postmodernism.
2. Selections of major distinguishing characteristics of postmodernism were broken down into concrete and discrete categories as they related to fashionable dress.

3. A checklist of these quintessential postmodern characteristics was created to use for data recording when examining the periodicals (See Appendix A).
4. Data Collection: (a) In an effort to make the study less arduous, every even numbered year of *Vogue* was reviewed, and every odd numbered year of *Harper's Bazaar* was reviewed. (b) Only apparel and accessories in fashion illustrations and accompanying verbal discourse featured in the magazine's monthly fashion editorial sections were examined. Each of these were reviewed and analyzed for elements of postmodern characteristics.
5. For each postmodern characteristic observed in dress the following data was collected: (a) the publication's title, (b) the volume and issue number of the publication, (c) the year of the issue, (e) what selected postmodernistic characteristics were present in each illustration, (f) a photocopy of the illustration, if relevant.
6. The data was analyzed in order to establish (a) the frequency of occurrence of the selected postmodern characteristics, (b) whether or not a difference existed between both periodicals in the frequency of occurrence of the selected postmodern characteristics, and (c) the most salient characteristics, out of the selected postmodern characteristics, as they made themselves manifest in the 1980s editions of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, in order to determine the major objective of this study—whether or not sufficient evidence exists to state that postmodernism had a significant impact on fashions of the 1980s.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for this study were obtained from an analysis of primary and secondary sources. In order to achieve the major objective of this study—to identify aspects of postmodern influences in dress as depicted in the 1980s issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines—the following steps were followed. First, secondary sources were employed to produce a firm foundation for this study in terms of developing a generalized understanding of postmodernism, the ways in which postmodernism relates to fashion, and procuring several representative characteristics of postmodernism for use in this study. The primary sources utilized in this study were the periodicals *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Thus, secondly 1980s issues were used to identify the selected postmodern characteristics by means of a content analysis method. Data was further analyzed according to the objectives of this study: (1) the rates of recurrence of the selected postmodern elements as they appeared in fashionable apparel of this period were noted, (2) differences in the rates of recurrence between both periodicals were reviewed, and (3) the most common aspects of the selected postmodern characteristics as they appeared in each magazine were ascertained.

#### Rate of Recurrence of the Selected Postmodern Characteristics

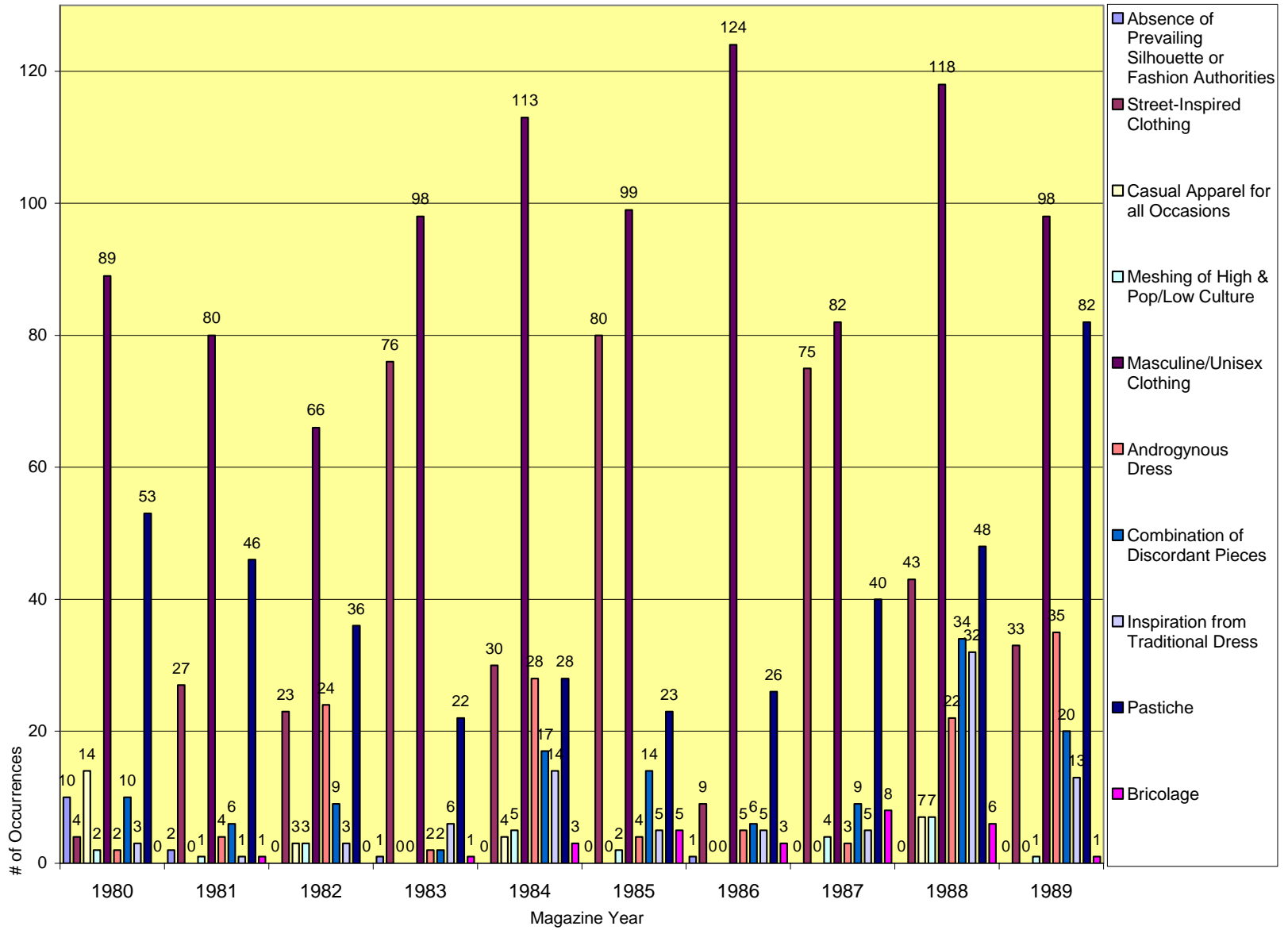
Several examples of the selected postmodern characteristics were found in the 1980s issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Table 1 shows the frequency of occurrence



Table 1: Occurrences of the Selected Postmodern Characteristics as Depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* from 1980-1989

	Denunciation of Fashion Authorities				Gender Blurring		Confusion of Signs		Recycling of Past Styles		Total
	Absence of Prevailing Silhouette or Fashion Authorities	Street-Inspired Clothing	Casual Apparel for all Occasions	Meshing of High & Pop/Low Culture	Masculine/Unisex Clothing	Androgynous Dress	Combination of Discordant Pieces	Inspiration from Traditional Dress	Pastiche	Bricolage	
1980	10	4	14	2	89	2	10	3	53	0	187
1981	2	27	0	1	80	4	6	1	46	1	168
1982	0	23	3	3	66	24	9	3	36	0	167
1983	1	76	0	0	98	2	2	6	22	1	208
1984	0	30	4	5	113	28	17	14	28	3	242
1985	0	80	0	2	99	4	14	5	23	5	232
1986	1	9	0	0	124	5	6	5	26	3	179
1987	0	75	0	4	82	3	9	5	40	8	226
1988	0	43	7	7	118	22	34	32	48	6	317
1989	0	33	0	1	98	35	20	13	82	1	283
Subtotal	14	400	28	442	25	129	127	87	404	28	2209
Total	467				1096		214		432		2209

Figure 1: Frequency of Occurrence of Postmodern Characteristics in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* Magazines



of the selected postmodern characteristics as they appeared in both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* over the years of 1980 through 1989. The frequency distribution in Figure 1 further illustrates the occurrences of the selected postmodern characteristics throughout the 1980s based on the references from both periodicals. A total of 2,209 examples of the selected postmodern characteristics were found over the ten year period. The year of the greatest appearance of postmodern characteristics was in 1988, with 317 examples.

#### Differences between *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* in their Representation of the Selected Postmodern Characteristics

The chart in Table 2 and the frequency distribution graph in Figure 2 illustrate the rate of recurrence of the selected postmodern characteristics as they were depicted in *Vogue* during the selected years. Table 3 and Figure 3 illustrate the frequency of occurrence of the selected postmodern characteristics as they appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* during the selected years. *Vogue* featured 1,092 examples of the selected postmodern characteristics, while *Harper's Bazaar* featured 1,117 examples. The highest record of examples for a single year occurred in the 1988 *Vogue* periodicals with 317 examples, while the second highest record of examples occurred in the 1989 *Harper's Bazaar* periodicals with 283 examples. These figures make sense as it is rational to conclude that as we plunge deeper into the postmodern era, our material culture will reflect the related cultural changes.

Both magazines were comparable in the number of examples found of postmodern characteristics. Editions of *Vogue* in the 1980s contained more fashion editorials and fashion advice than their competitor *Harper's Bazaar*, which may explain

Table 2: Occurrences of the Selected Postmodern Characteristics as Depicted in *Vogue* Magazine

	Denunciation of Fashion Authorities				Gender Blurring		Confusion of Signs		Recycling of Past Styles		Total
	Absence of Prevailing Silhouette or Fashion Authorities	Street-Inspired Clothing	Casual Apparel for all Occasions	Meshing of High & Pop/Low Culture	Masculine/Unisex Clothing	Androgynou s Dress	Combination of Discordant Pieces	Inspiration from Traditional Dress	Pastiche	Bricolage	
1980	10	4	14	2	89	2	10	3	53	0	187
1982	0	23	3	3	66	24	9	3	36	0	167
1984	0	30	4	5	113	28	17	14	28	3	242
1986	1	9	0	0	124	5	6	5	26	3	179
1988	0	43	7	7	118	22	34	32	48	6	317
Subtotal	11	109	28	17	510	81	76	57	191	12	1092
Total	165				591		133		203		1092

Figure 2: Frequency of Occurrence of Selected Postmodern Characteristics in *Vogue*

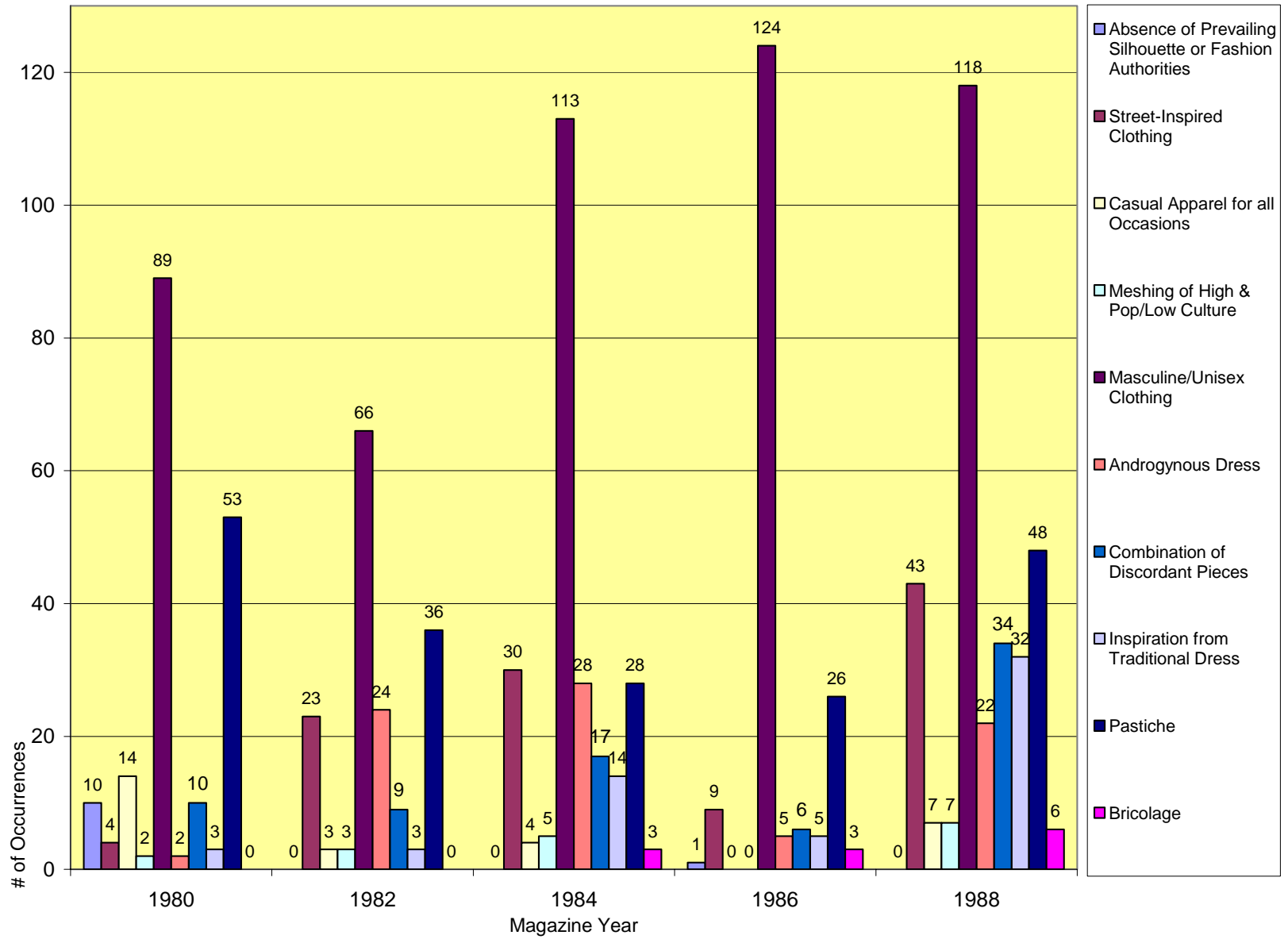
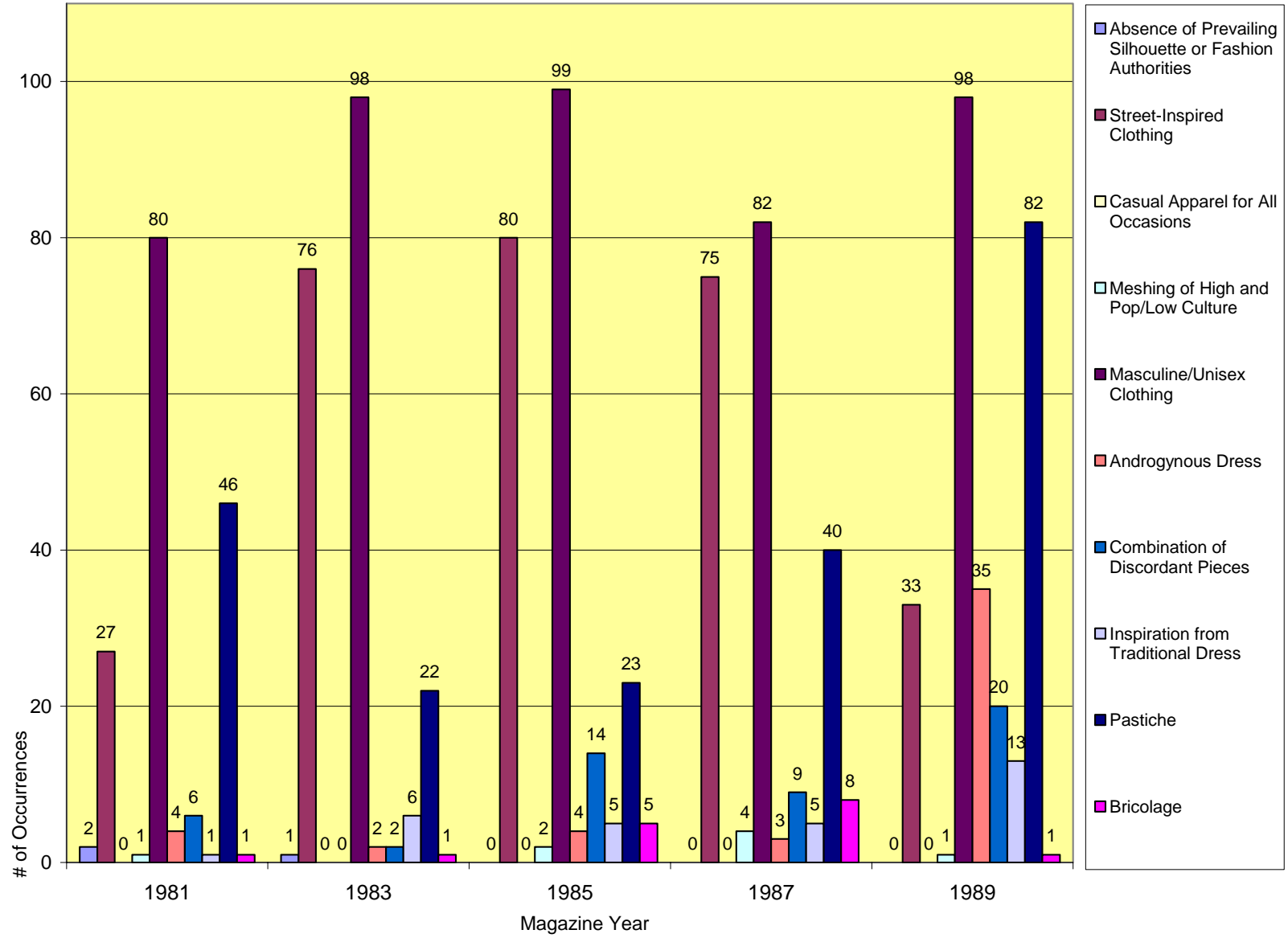


Table 3: Occurrences of the Selected Postmodern Characteristics as Depicted in *Harper's Bazaar* Magazine

	Denunciation of Fashion Authorities				Gender Blurring		Confusion of Signs		Recycling of Past Styles		Total
	Absence of Prevailing Silhouette or Fashion Authorities	Street-Inspired Clothing	Casual Apparel for all Occasions	Meshing of High & Pop/Low Culture	Masculine/Unisex Clothing	Androgynous Dress	Combination of Discordant Pieces	Inspiration from Traditional Dress	Pastiche	Bricolage	
1981	2	27	0	1	80	4	6	1	46	1	168
1983	1	76	0	0	98	2	2	6	22	1	208
1985	0	80	0	2	99	4	14	5	23	5	232
1987	0	75	0	4	82	3	9	5	40	8	226
1989	0	33	0	1	98	35	20	13	82	1	283
Subtotal	3	291	0	8	457	48	51	30	213	16	1117
Total	302				505		81		229		1117

Figure 3: Frequency of Occurrence of Selected Postmodern Characteristics in *Harper's Bazaar*



why *Vogue* contained several more examples of an “Absence of Prevailing Silhouettes” and “Casual Apparel for all Occasions,” as these characteristics were primarily identified via verbal discourse. For both periodicals, “Masculine/Unisex Clothing” was the greatest characteristic found within their 1980s editions. The biggest difference found between the two periodicals was that *Harper’s Bazaar* featured a far greater amount of instances of “Street-Inspired Clothing” than did *Vogue* magazine. It was assumed that both periodicals would be analogous in their findings prior to the beginning of the research; however, it became evident that both magazines adhered to a different agenda and targeted two distinct demographics. *Harper’s Bazaar* focused on a consumer willing to take more fashion risks; a fashion leader who experiments with trendier, avant-garde fashion. Whereas, *Vogue* took a more classic approach, seemingly catering to a more career-oriented consumer who lives a professional lifestyle and is less likely to experiment with fashion.

#### Most Salient Postmodern Characteristics Featured

##### in *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*

The most salient postmodern characteristic identified in this study was the use of (1) gender blurring dress for women, followed by (2) a denunciation of fashion authorities, (3) a recycling of past styles, and lastly (4) a confusion of signs in dress. Thus, the abovementioned characteristics will be discussed in order of observed prevalence.

#### Gender Blurring

Gender blurring dress for women was by far the most salient postmodern characteristic found after a longitudinal content analysis study of 1980s editions of *Vogue*



and *Harper's Bazaar* periodicals. Between the years of 1980-1989, 1,096 occurrences of gender blurring in dress appeared in this study; this figure accounts for almost half of all the observed postmodern occurrences. A total of 967 of these occurrences belonged to masculine and/or unisex dress, and a total of 129 of these occurrences belonged to androgynous dress. In *Vogue* magazine, 591 occurrences of gender blurring in dress were noted (510 for masculine/unisex dress, and 81 for androgynous dress). And in *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, 505 occurrences of gender blurring in dress were noted (457 for masculine/unisex dress, and 48 for androgynous dress). It is believed that because *Vogue* magazine catered to a more career-oriented consumer than its competitor *Harper's Bazaar*, greater instances of masculine and androgynous dress were noted in *Vogue* as many women began to collectively don the suit—the western uniform for the professional man—in the 1980s. As greater numbers of women entered into managerial positions in the corporate world during this time, they began to wear a feminized version of the traditional men's suit. This style was suggested for women who wanted to “dress for success” (Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

Earlier research has suggested that gender differences in clothing are utilized in the social construction and reproduction of gender and traditional gender roles (Butler, 1990; Workman & Johnson, 1993). People use dress to identify the gender of others, and to construct and publicly display their own gender orientation. In a study that examined gender roles in history from the 1300s to 1970, Taylor (1970) found that at times when the expected societal roles of men and women diverged greatly, their clothing reflected this difference and male and female dress was greatly dissimilar. An example of this could be noted in the dress of men and women during the 1950s. During the post World

War II era, women and men adhered to conservative gender norms and this orthodox attitude was reflected in their everyday dress. In like manner, Taylor also discovered that at times when the roles of men and women were more similar, their dress manifested this similarity. This helps to explain the great similarity between men's and women's dress during the 1980s. In the eighties, men's and women's clothing were quite similar, if not entirely unisex at times. As women began to experience major changes in their career options and lifestyle choices, conventional gender roles began to diffuse as well, and taboos associated with gender blurring dress began to evaporate in women's wear (See Figures 4-6).

Instances of androgynous dress only made up 11.77% of all occurrences of gender blurring as depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* in this study. This small figure, compared to the 88.23% figure of masculine and unisex dress, makes sense as androgynous dress is more of an avant-garde statement by a postmodern fashion designer, and/or photographer, than it is acceptable wear for mainstream society as of now. It must be noted also that truly androgynous dress has never really existed in society, as this would call for an equal melding of items inherently characteristic of both genders. As of yet, gender blurring dress has been decidedly one-sided, heavily tilting over to the male side in the sex/gender dichotomy (See Figures 7 & 8).

Nonetheless, gender blurring dress via masculine or androgynous clothing for women provides opportunities for anti-hegemonic interpretations of traditional women's roles by either redefining the meaning of female sexuality, or denying female sexuality altogether. In the postmodern social landscape it has usually been women and other minorities who have manipulated sartorial codes for the purpose of asserting or retrieving



Figure 4: Masculine/Unisex Dress Designed by Giorgio Armani  
(*Vogue*, March, 1984, p. 439)



Figure 5: Example of Masculine/Unisex Dress  
(*Vogue*, February, 1986, p. 310)



Figure 6: Masculine/Unisex Dress Seen in this Two-Piece  
Houndstooth Plaid Suit by Bill Blass  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, October, 1989, p. 172)



Figure 7: Androgynous Dress  
(*Vogue*, July, 1988, p. 197)



Figure 8: Androgynous Dress  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, April, 1989, p. 165)

a unique identity, as white heterosexual males would benefit little from disrupting a social order that favors them. The employment of gender blurring in dress provides an escape for women from the previous modern order which depended on stability and coherence. Contestation through dress challenges binary gender categories, creating opportunities for rearticulating subjectivity.

#### Denunciation of Fashion Authorities

“Denunciation of Fashion Authorities” was the second most prominent postmodern characteristic found in the material culture of this study. A total of 467 instances of a rejection of fashion authorities were observed. As a sub-characteristic, Street-Inspired clothing was the most salient with 400 observed occurrences (109 from *Vogue*, and 291 from *Harper’s Bazaar*). As mentioned above, *Harper’s Bazaar* dominated this category as it is a publication targeted to a more avant-garde consumer willing to take more fashion risks.

Correspondingly, it is pertinent to note that by the late 1980s, street-influence in fashion seemed to meld effortlessly into the mainstream and high fashions depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar*. It became challenging later in the decade to isolate components of street-influence on fashion in the styles portrayed in these periodicals as it seemed that street-fashion became synonymous with most high fashion. The actuality of high and mainstream fashions finding inspiration from styles that originated from the street, instead of from a fashion designer’s studio, is evidence of a rejection of authority on the part of the postmodern social landscape. Where fashion once almost exclusively originated from bona fide fashion designers in modern times, and these fashions in turn influenced mass fashions, the postmodern social order has seemingly seen a reverse in



these conditions, and it is not always clear where inspiration for new styles stems from (See Figures 9-11).

“Casual Apparel for all Occasions” was the second most prominent characteristic in this category, with 28 noted instances. All of the noted instances, however, were observed in *Vogue* alone. As previously stated, one possible explanation for this lies in the fact that 1980s editions of *Vogue* contained far more verbal discourse in their monthly fashion editorial sections than did *Harper’s Bazaar*. And this sub-characteristic was primarily identified through the verbal discourse of these magazines. This may also help to explain the asymmetry found in the sub-characteristic of an “Absence of Prevailing Silhouette or Fashion Authorities,” as this characteristic was also primarily identified via verbal discourse. Eleven occurrences of this characteristic were found in *Vogue*; three were found in *Harper’s Bazaar*. It is also interesting to note that ten of the aforementioned characteristic were found in the 1980 editions of *Vogue* periodicals. After this year, there was a marked drop in the observance of this postmodern characteristic. A similar trend may be observed in the subcategory of “Casual Apparel for all Occasions,” as the majority of this characteristic was also noted in 1980. A possible explanation for the plummet in these sub-characteristics may be that by mid-decade, the absence of a prevailing silhouette and the popularity of casual apparel for all occasions became a commonplace occurrence, and the mention of these phenomena were no longer necessary as these postmodern characteristics had become a set-in custom.

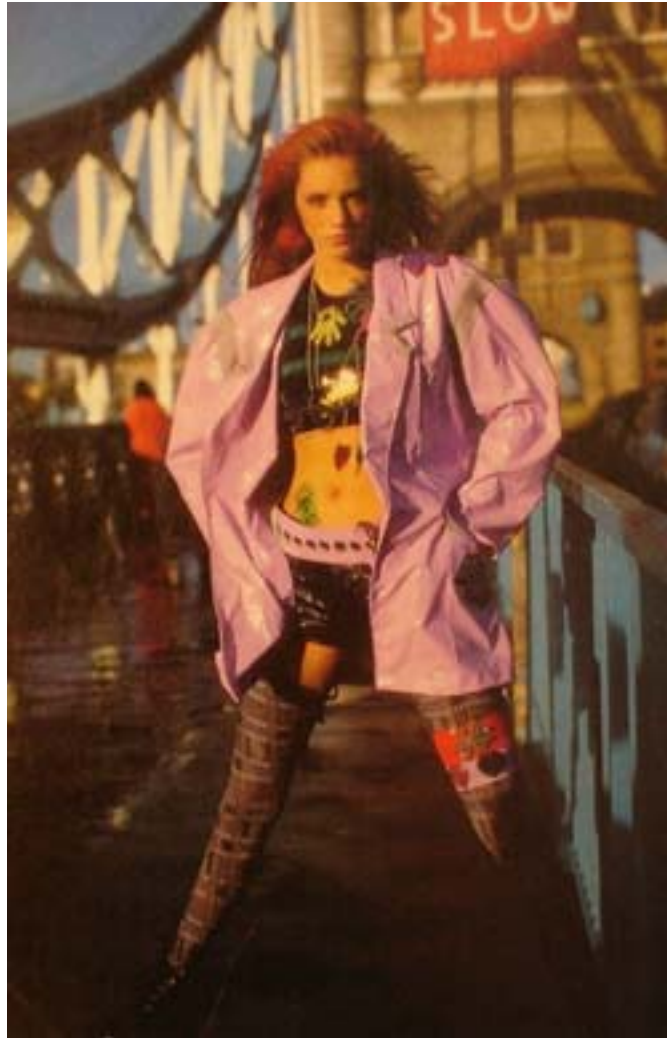


Figure 9: Street-Influenced Dress Designed by BodyMap  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, January, 1985, p. 172)



Figure 10: Street-Influenced Dress Designed by Norma Kamali  
*(Harper's Bazaar, March, 1985, p. 269)*



Figure 11: Street-Influenced Dress Designed by Katherine Hamnett Displaying Political Message—"Protest and Survive"—on a Red Silk Tunic  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, April, 1985, p. 177)

It is possible to argue that the pluralism of clothing styles that have bombarded the fashion marketplace in such a hysterical and rapid manner could be interpreted as a postmodern rejection of metanarratives and systems of totality that belong to modern times. Instead of a rational and orderly linear progression of fashion “looks,” postmodernism challenges this authority. A single fashionable look or silhouette would imply totality, it would be a grand narrative, and this is not in accordance with postmodern times. Rather, a heteroglossia of dress codes exist, and none that have a dominance over any other.

A total of 25 occurrences of the postmodern sub-characteristic of a meshing of high and popular/low culture were found throughout the years of 1980-1989. Seventeen of these were observed in *Vogue*, while eight of these were observed in *Harper's Bazaar* (See Figures 12 & 13).

It is important to point out that the meshing of high culture with popular or low culture does not signify an end of high culture, or an end of high fashion for that matter. Rather, it marks the erosion of categories that support a system of hierarchy which attributes a higher value to only certain types of creative projects. The postmodern social order provides an equal playing field for all forms of expressive works, as well as the potential for a combination of previously separate and distinct artistic works. The desire to do away with such polar cultural distinctions has allowed for a politics of tactical reinscription that shifts power from hegemonic groups to marginalized groups.



Figure 12: Meshing of High Culture with Low Culture  
Exemplified in this Haute Couture Apron Designed by Moschino  
(*Vogue*, November, 1986, p. 362)



Figure 13: Meshing of High Culture with Low Culture Exemplified in an Artistic Masterpiece Having Been Printed Onto a Playful Dress  
(*Vogue*, May, 1988, p. 300)

### Recycling of Past Styles

A total of 432 occurrences of a recycling of past styles presented themselves in this study. Both magazines were comparable in their findings in this postmodern characteristic as *Vogue* had 203 instances of a recycling of past styles, and *Harper's Bazaar* had 229 instances. The majority of occurrences of a recycling of past styles belonged to the subcategory of "Pastiche," with 404 noted occurrences. The other 28 occurrences belonged to the "Bricolage" subcategory. It is logical to conclude that far fewer instances of bricolage were noted in the 1980s editions of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* because these are high fashion magazines that target an upper class stratum of society. As such, this demographic is less likely to tinker with appearance management in avant-garde ways using everyday objects.

American philosopher Frederic Jameson identified pastiche as a crucial postmodern characteristic, and the material culture provided in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* certainly attests to his thesis. These periodicals featured a revival of a plethora of past styles, including a simultaneous regurgitation of styles inherent to every past decade of the twentieth century; many of these dusted and intermingled with third world ethnic allusions, stripping meaning away from these past signs (See Figures 14-20). Concurrent revivals of classical Grecian dress and Baroque costume met with the pastiche of new psychedelia and Romantic period resurgences, creating new aesthetic and historical assemblages, and providing evidence that postmodern fashion is less an issue of ingenuity ex nihilo than of alteration and pastiche.





Figure 14: Pastiche of Ethnic Bedouin Dress Designed by Yves Saint Laurent  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, January, 1981, p. 99)



Figure 15: Pastiche of Mariano Fortuny Gown Designed by Mary McFadden, Inc.  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, February, 1983, p. 158)



Figure 16: Pastiche of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Style for the Female Appropriation of Straw Boaters, Walking Sticks and Netted Gloves  
(*Vogue*, May, 1986, p. 310)



Figure 17: Pastiche of Bustle Period Gown  
(*Vogue*, November, 1986, p. 390)



Figure 18: Pastiche of 1950s Suit  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, October, 1987, p. 248)



Figure 19: Pastiche of Hubert deGivenchy's Famous 1960s Shift Dress  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, July, 1989, p. 81)



Figure 20: Pastiche of Romantic Period Gown  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, November, 1989, p. 174)

The extensiveness of the employment of pastiche in postmodern fashion is a nod towards the postmodern premise of an end of progress. The proliferation of new styles in modernity suggested a sense of social progress. However, postmodernism suggests an end of original thought. Another noteworthy observation lies in the pastiche of ethnic styles that have made a significant presence for themselves in postmodern fashion. Modernity, and fashion in modern times, had the tendency to emphasize the “normal” (white, middle class, heterosexual); postmodern culture, however, accentuates deviations from this norm. Diversity is emphasized through the pastiche of ethnic styles.

Bricolage also performs the function of emphasizing that which lies out of the norm. It could be said that bricolage can be seen as a defiance to modernist ideas of the past and related assumptions concerning the natural meaning of aesthetic forms (See Figures 21 & 22). Bricolage modifies the traditional meaning of objects by using them in ironic ways, rather than in terms of pastiche. This is said to be an important characteristic of postmodernism. Moreover, bricolage is significant as a tool of postmodern fashion in that it emphasizes avant-garde means of ornamentation and parodic embellishment, as compared to modern fashion which emphasized simplicity and practicality.

### Confusion of Signs

Out of the four major selected postmodern characteristics, a confusion of signs was the least prominent characteristic detected in this study. A total of 214 occurrences of a confusion of signs was noted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* from 1980-1989. While weak in relation to the other selected characteristic, this characteristic still proved to be significant in its findings. The sub-characteristic of a combination of discordant pieces appeared 127 times in the selected periodicals (76 from *Vogue*, 51 from *Harper's*



*Bazaar*). Eighty-seven instances of an inspiration from traditional dress were noted in this study (57 from *Vogue*, and 30 from *Harper's Bazaar*).

The use of incongruous pieces out of their natural contexts offers a burlesque statement which demolishes notions inherent to modern culture (See Figures 23-27). Modern fashion was rational in that it adhered to elements that were harmonious and congruent. Postmodern fashion is irrational in that it disregards modernist assumptions on what is natural and combines diverse colors, lines, fabrics, and styles that intentionally destabilize cultural categories (i.e. time, occasion, gender, race, and status) embedded in modern times.



Figure 21: Employment of Bricolage in Dress  
(*Vogue*, October, 1986, p. 521)

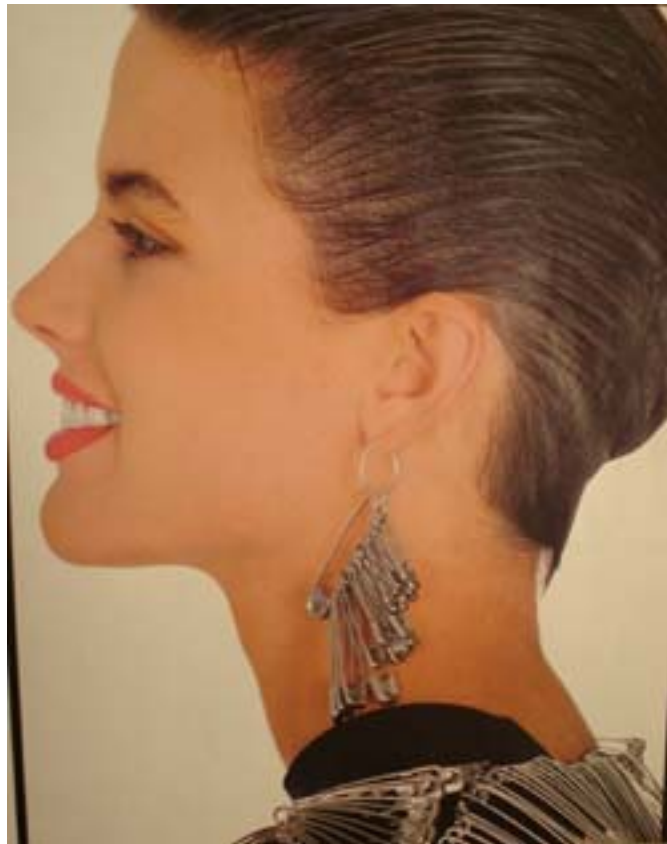


Figure 22: Bricolage in Dress Seen in the Employment of Safety Pins for Sartorial Adornment (*Harper's Bazaar*, August, 1987, p. 33)



Figure 23: A Combination of Discordant Pieces in Dress  
Seen in Above Outfit Designed by John Galliano.  
An Afghan-Inspired Shirdress is Paired with Grand-Scaled Envelope Pants and a  
Burgundy-on-Gold Silk Moiré Waistcoat, and Worn With a Jute Utility Belt Adorned  
with Miscellaneous Kitchen Utensils  
(*Harper's Bazaar*, January, 1985, p. 178)



Figure 24: A Combination of Discordant Pieces in Dress Seen in  
Christian Lacroix's Design for Patou.  
A Full Blown Bustle is Attached to a Heavily Embellished  
Nehru Jacket and Paired With Pencil-Thin Leather Pants.  
(*Vogue*, November, 1986, p. 362)



Figure 25: Inspiration from Traditional Dress  
Manifested in Fendi's Policewoman Uniform  
(*Vogue*, January, 1984, p. 210)



Figure 26: Evidence of Inspiration from Traditional Dress in Jean-Paul Gaultier's 1986 Revolutionary Dressing Collection (*Vogue*, November, 1986, p. 362)



Figure 27: Example of Inspiration from Traditional Dress in Christian Lacroix's 1988 Jacket Embellished with Medieval Cross. The Weighty Symbolism of the Cross Becomes a Playful Accessory and a Sign Without Meaning. (*Vogue*, November, 1988, p. 352)



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research sought to identify aspects of postmodern influences in dress as seen in the 1980s issues of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* in an effort to determine the extent of postmodernism's influence on fashion in the United States during the 1980s. After a thorough study of secondary sources, several characteristics were determined as being representative of postmodernism's influence on fashion. The first characteristic was a "Denunciation of Fashion Authorities." This characteristic was narrowed down further into the four discrete sub-characteristics of (1) an absence of a prevailing silhouette or fashion authorities, (2) high-end and mainstream fashions finding inspiration from styles originating from the street, (3) the donning of casual apparel for all occasions, and (4) the crumbing of aesthetic divisions that once separated high culture from popular and/or low cultures.

"Gender Blurring" was the second established postmodern characteristic, and it was further subdivided into the two additional sub-characteristics of (1) the use of masculine and/or unisex clothing by women, (2) and the wearing of androgynous dress that has the effect of producing an ambiguous gender identity.

Additionally, a "Confusion of Signs" was termed as a significant postmodern characteristic. Elements of this characteristic are (1) a combination of discordant pieces,

producing a schizophrenic message via one's dress, as well as (2) evidence of inspiration from traditional dress on the mainstream and high fashions.

And lastly, a "Recycling of Past Styles" was identified as a crucial postmodern characteristic. The important postmodern concepts of pastiche and bricolage fall under this broad grouping.

A checklist was formulated out of the determined postmodern characteristics for the purpose of objective and methodical coding. A longitudinal content analysis method was employed by using popular periodicals (*Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*) as a database. Monthly fashion spreads and accompanying fashion editorial discourse were solely reviewed in this study. A total of 120 periodical issues were examined—60 from *Harper's Bazaar* and 60 from *Vogue*.

The findings from this research have suggested that postmodernism did have a significant impact on fashion as depicted in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* from 1980-1989. Over this ten year period, a total of 2,209 examples of the chosen postmodern elements were found in the selected periodicals. Both magazines proved to be comparable in their findings. *Vogue* featured 1,092 examples of the selected postmodern characteristics. *Harper's Bazaar* featured 1,117 examples of the selected postmodern characteristics.

Gender blurring techniques employed via dress proved to be the most salient postmodern characteristic out of the established characteristics. A sum of 1,096 occurrences of gender blurring dress were found in this study; 967 of these belonged to the masculine/unisex dress category. A denunciation of fashion authorities was the second most salient postmodern characteristic observed, with 467 observed instances. The majority of these observances were for street-influenced styles in high and

mainstream dress. Thirdly, a recycling of past fashion styles showed 432 noted observances; 404 of these were examples of pastiche in dress. Lastly, 214 occurrences of a “Confusion of Signs” were observed in this study that were either a combination of discordant pieces, and/or an inspiration from traditional dress.

### Conclusion

Since the onslaught of the term “postmodernism” being liberally tossed around in our daily vernacular, the researcher has fostered a deep interest on the topic. However, at the same time, the topic was a frustrating one to grasp because the term seems to be incessantly used contradictorily and irresponsibly. As French fashion designer Franco Moschino so wittily commented in a March 1989 interview with *Vogue*, “Nobody [knows what postmodernism is], but it is so chic to say” (*Vogue*, p.144). Moreover, the arcane theories and dense dialect that ladens postmodern theory does little to elucidate on the esoteric subject matter.

However, it is impossible to ignore the importance of postmodernism as a phenomenon because many in the academy have labeled our contemporary culture as postmodern for several decades as of this study. And many disciplines make extensive use of postmodern theory to further their own research.

Postmodern theory lends itself very well to sociological and psychological implications of dress scholarship. Employment of postmodern theory can only work to strengthen the study of fashion and dress. Recognition that developments in fashion are not merely a result of social movements, but involve the interaction of many interrelated areas, will help scholars of clothing and dress to avoid the dangers of reductionism. Likewise, it is important for dress scholars to confront issues related to fashion and dress

previously considered taboo, such as power and exploitation, built into the very structures of its theories.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

1. Only two primary sources, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, were utilized in this study. Future research might consider using more periodicals, and periodicals that appeal to other audiences. The beauty and fashion orientation of the above periodicals undoubtedly influenced the results of this study. Employing general interest periodicals, such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, or less traditional women's periodicals, such as *Nylon* or *Bust*, might produce different results. Moreover, periodicals published outside of the United States could also be examined.
2. The present study may also be expanded to include an analysis of men's fashions as they are depicted in periodicals catered towards male fashion interests utilizing historical publications such as *Esquire* or *GQ* magazine.
3. Reviewing fashion advertisements in periodicals, as opposed to fashion spreads and fashion editorials, could be investigated as these oftentimes have the propensity of being more avant-garde.
4. The period of investigation for this study covered the years of 1980-1989. Further research can be carried out from the years of 1950-1979, as some scholars argue that elements of postmodernism could be seen in our social order as early as in post World War II years. In like manner, this study may be replicated by examining the years from 1990 to the present day.
5. Other media sources besides periodicals may be used in this study. Primary sources such as film, newspapers, or music, can be employed in a similar study.

6. The present study examined ten different postmodern characteristics as they were represented in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. The list of selected elements was by no means exhaustive. An investigation of how other postmodern characteristics have manifested themselves in fashionable clothing via a content analysis of past material culture is recommended for future studies.
7. The researcher would also like to examine how postmodern dress has been a reflection of art and architecture that is considered to be postmodern in nature.

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APPENDIX

